

OPINION 6
INDIA NEEDS PROTOCOLS
NOT PRIVILEGES

WORLD 9
HUN SEN SET FOR
LANDSLIDE VICTORY

MONEY 10
FIVE OF TOP-TEN MOST VALUED
FIRMS ADD ₹4.23L CRORE IN MCAP

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Appeal to Opp to join debate in Parl: Anurag

Opp plans protest, seeks Manipur CM's sacking

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With the Opposition parties scheduled to stage a protest near the Gandhi statue in Parliament premises on Monday over the Manipur crisis, the Centre has appealed to all parties "with folded hands" to join the debate on the ethnic violence in the northeastern State when the Monsoon Session resumes in Parliament on Monday. There was a deadlock in proceedings in both the Houses when the Parliament Session started last week.

Opposition parties, led by the Congress on Sunday said that there would be no movement towards peace in Manipur as long as N Biren Singh remains the Chief Minister as it urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to act now and not "deflect, distort and defame to cover up" the "collapse of the so-called double engine governance" in the northeastern State. Union Minister Anurag Thakur urged the Opposition not to politicise the issue of atrocities against women in Manipur.

The deadlock in Parliament came in the wake of the Government insisting that Home Minister Amit Shah will speak on the issue on Manipur and not Prime Minister Modi. "Atrocities against women are painful, no matter which State the victims belong to. It is the responsibility of the State to curb such incidents," Thakur said. Thakur said the Government is keen on a discussion on the issue of atrocities on women, which are prevalent in States such as Rajasthan, Manipur, Bihar and West Bengal.

"We wish that there should be a good discussion on this in the House, where all political parties will participate. Nobody should run away from the debate. It is my request to the Opposition with folded hands, do not run away from the discussion," Thakur said. He said the Opposition should not politicise such issues and should join the discussion in Parliament. "The Opposition does all this to remain in discussion, but it does nothing to join the discussion," Thakur said when asked about the protests on the Manipur issue.

The Opposition parties have planned joint protests in Parliament on Monday on the situation in Manipur. They have been demanding a statement



A protest in New Delhi over the violence in Manipur. Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

from Prime Minister Modi in Parliament before starting a discussion on the issue. The Monsoon Session of Parliament began on July 20 and has witnessed disruptions over the ethnic violence in Manipur, particularly over a video purportedly shot on May 4 and depicting atrocities against women in the State. The video surfaced last week.

Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said, "Every passing day as the truth of the horror of Manipur continues to trickle out, it is clear that the law and order in the State has collapsed. Mobs, armed vigilantes and insurgent groups are running amok.

Women and families have faced the worst, unimaginable

41 Meiteis reach Assam even as Mizoram assures them of safety

PTI ■ GUWAHATI/SILCHAR/KOLKATA

Forty-one Meitei people have reached Assam from Mizoram after an ex-militants' group asked the community to leave the State following the viral video of two women being paraded naked in Manipur, officials said on Sunday.

Cachar's Superintendent of Police Numal Mahatta said these people reached Silchar from neighbouring Mizoram on Saturday night and they have been kept at the building of the Lakhipur Development Block in Binnakandi area.

"These are all well-to-do families and they came in their own vehicles. Some are college professors, while some work as senior Government officials. They said that there have been no attacks in Mizoram as of now," he said. They said that the Mizoram Government was providing all security to them, but they themselves did not want to take any risk and came to Assam for their own safety, he added. *Contd on page 2*

Assam Rifles files sedition case against civil society group

Rumours, fake news fuelling violence in Manipur: Officials

PTI ■ IMPHAL

The Assam Rifles has registered a sedition and defamation case against the chief of the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), an influential civil society group in Manipur's capital. A highly-placed Defence source said a First Information Report (FIR) was registered against COCOMI on July 10, after the outfit gave a call to people "not to surrender weapons."

Meanwhile, officials from various security agencies who have been monitoring the situation in the restive northeastern State said the ethnic violence that erupted on May 3 and has left over 160 dead has been largely fuelled by rumours and fake news. Regarding the FIR, a police officer confirmed, "We have registered an FIR against



COCOMI against Jitendra Ningomba, convener of COCOMI, at Churachandpur police station, under Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), pertaining to sedition; Section 153 A IPC, promoting enmity between different groups on ground of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc." Sources alleged that many women protesters were assaulted by the Army in Moirang of Bishnupur on June 30. The Army, however, has denied the allegation.

In a memorandum to the Union Home Minister on June 4, COCOMI had demanded that the Assam Rifles be replaced with any other Central Armed Police Force, adding that local youths were not willing to surrender arms. (See page P4)

PM must step in to bring peace in Manipur: Irom

PTI ■ KOLKATA

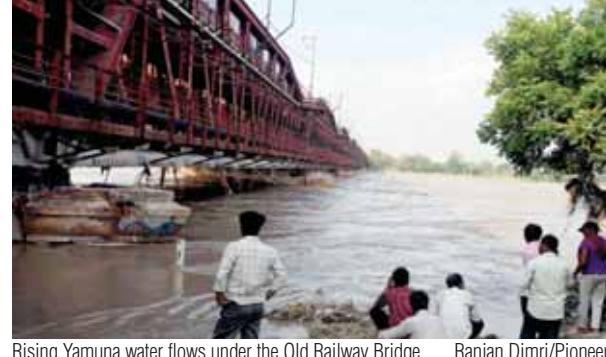


Civil rights activist Irom Sharmila on Sunday described the incident of strip-and-parade of two tribal women as "inhuman" and "very disturbing" and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to immediately intervene to address the situation in her home State. She also demanded that Chief Minister N Biren Singh admit his failure and apologise to the people of Manipur.

The 51-year-old award-winning activist said she could not hold her tears after watching the video clip that showed two women being paraded naked and molested by a group of men in Kangpokpi district of the northeastern state on May 4. The video which surfaced on July 19 sparked condemnation nationwide. *Continued on page 2*

"I seek an urgent meeting with your hon'ble self to discuss the extremely pertinent issue of the human rights violations and sexual assault cases occurring in Manipur... Several Manipuri women have come to Delhi in order to escape the ongoing violence in the State. I wish to discuss issues regarding their welfare," she said.

Flood threat over Delhi as Yamuna rises



Rising Yamuna water flows under the Old Railway Bridge. Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The water level in the Yamuna River has risen above the danger mark, reaching 206.39 meters at the Old Railway Bridge in Delhi. The surge in discharge from the Hathnikund Barrage, resulting from heavy rainfall in parts of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, has led to the rapid increase in the river's water level. This is expected to rise to 206.7 metres by Monday morning. "Thereafter the steady level is likely to remain steady," stated the forecast.

Meanwhile, the Delhi flood has claimed a fresh victim, as a three-year-old boy drowned in north Delhi's Kirari area with his family blaming it on the negligence of the administration. The deceased, identified

as Arif, was the only brother among his five sisters.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah spoke to Delhi Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena about the water level in the Yamuna River. "Spoke to Gujarat CM Shri @Bhupendrapji Ji about the flood-like situation occurring in various parts of the State due to the recent heavy rainfall. Also had a discussion with LG of Delhi, Shri VK Saxena Ji about the water level in the Yamuna river. Ample numbers of SDRF and NDRF teams are available to help the people in need," the Home Minister said on Twitter.

The rise in water level yet again sparked concerns of flood-like situation in the national Capital and adjoining regions. *Continued on page 2*

CAPSULE

MNS MEN RANSACK NASHIK TOLL PLAZA

Nashik: Some Maharashtra Navnirman Sena workers allegedly ransacked a toll plaza in Nashik in the early hours of Sunday after party leader Amit Thackeray was stopped at it earlier, an official said. He is the son of MNS founder Raj Thackeray and was reportedly stopped at Gonde toll plaza in Sinnar at 9:15 PM on Saturday while on his way to Mumbai due to some mismatch in his vehicle's Fastag details, he said. At around 2:30 AM on Sunday, a mob, allegedly MNS workers, ransacked the plaza and made a worker agitate.

ASI TO BEGIN GYANVAPI MOSQUE SURVEY

Varanasi: A team of the ASI arrived here on Sunday to conduct a scientific survey to determine if the Gyanvapi mosque located next to the Kashi Vishwanath temple is built upon a temple. Advocate of the Hindu side Madan Mohan Yadav said that the ASI team will start the survey of the Gyanvapi complex at around 7 am on Monday. He added that an advocate each of the petitioners will accompany the team.

INDIAN LADY IN PAK TO MEET HER FB FRIEND

Peshawar/Jaipur: A married Indian woman Anju, 34, has travelled to Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province to meet her friend Nasrulla, 29, whom she befriended and fell in love with on Facebook, police said. However, she is there on valid travel papers and has no plans to marry him.

Baghel first in line for CM post post Chh'garh win: Singhdeo

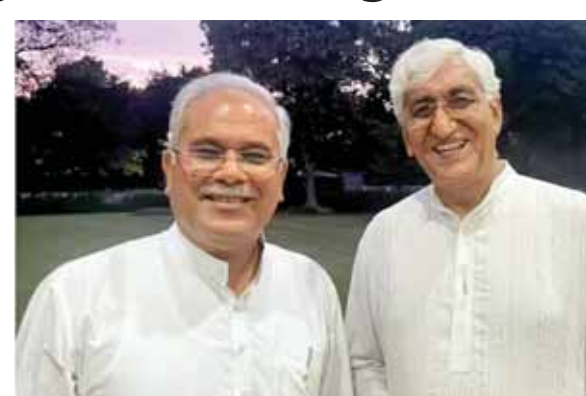
PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chhattisgarh Deputy Chief Minister TS Singhdeo on Sunday said the Congress would fight the Assembly polls under a "collective leadership" helmed by Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and if the party wins, Baghel would be "first in line" to be considered for the CM's post.

Singhdeo said if an incumbent Chief Minister has not been removed, it means the party maintains its belief in that person being able to lead the team to victory and after the win "why should the captain be changed?"

He also predicted the Congress was likely to bag another resounding mandate in the 90-member assembly, saying some are projecting 75-plus seats for his party but his estimate is anywhere between 60 to 75-plus. The Congress had won 68 seats in the 2018 Assembly polls.

Asked if tensions between Baghel and him are a thing of the past after he was made the Deputy Chief Minister last month, Singhdeo said, "There was no real bitterness or enmity, we (Baghel and him) were



working together. There was this issue of time sharing, two-and-a-half years, I think that was weighing on our minds as well as on the minds of everybody associated with the two of us. That time has gone by. Even when those matters were in discussion, we were still performing to the best of our ability."

On whether he felt a sense of betrayal for not getting two-and-a-half years as the Chief Minister, he said, "I don't see it as a betrayal. I see it as a decision which the high command takes, it is their call. I cannot become the Chief Minister, it is the high command, on the

feedback it has, that gives designated roles to all of us."

"There is no betrayal as it is the call which the high command has to take and we abide by it," Singhdeo added.

Asked whether he being made the deputy CM was a climb down from an earlier position or a progression, Singhdeo said he was, on protocol, already the number two in the cabinet.

"We have these official protocols. So the CM had given me the protocol after him. He was number one and I was number 2 and Tamradhwaj Sahu ji was number 3 etc. *Continued on page 2*

Cong stages silent protest on Rahul's LS disqualification

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Sunday staged a silent protest at Jantar Mantar to condemn the ethnic clashes in Manipur and voice their dissent over the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi from Lok Sabha.

Several leaders, including Ajay Maken, Harun Yusuf, Jai Kishan, and workers of the Congress gathered at the Jantar Mantar in the heart of the national Capital for the "Maun Satyagraha Dharna".

The Congress said silent protest sought to draw attention to the issues affecting common people and emphasized the party's commitment to address concerns related to unemployment and inflation both inside and outside



Congress leaders protest at Jantar Mantar. Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

Parliament. Delhi Congress President Anil Chaudhary said through the protest, the Congress party is highlighting the issues affecting the common people. "You can take away Rahul Gandhi's Lok

Sabha membership, his house but he won't be afraid. Through 'Maun Satyagraha', Congress party is bringing the issues of common people before the Govt," Chaudhary said. *Continued on page 2*

PM to launch swanky convention centre for G20

Bigger than Sydney Opera House, IECC at revamped Pragati Maidan will rival world's best venues

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to inaugurate on July 26 the swanky International Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (IECC) and the ambitious Integrated Transit Corridor (ITC) at the redeveloped Pragati Maidan, which is set to host the G20 leaders' Summit in September. The redeveloped Pragati Maidan complex, which is owned by India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) is spread across 123 acres and is India's largest venue for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE).

In January 2017, the Government approved the proposal of ITPO for the redevelop-



opment of Pragati Maidan by setting up of a world-class IECC in the national Capital. The total cost of the project is Rs 2,254 crore.

In a series of tweets sharing the photos and details of the IECC complex, the Press

Information Bureau said: "The redeveloped ITPO [India Trade Promotion Organisation] complex, which will host India's G20 Leaders meetings will be inaugurated on 26th July." While the tweets did not mention it, a Government source

said the Prime Minister is likely to inaugurate the new facility. In terms of the covered space available for events, the redeveloped and modern IECC complex finds its place among the top 10 exhibition and convention complexes in the world, rivalling colossal names such as the Hannover Exhibition Centre in Germany, the National Exhibition and Convention Centre (NECC) in Shanghai, officials said.

The magnitude of the IECC's stature and infrastructure is a testament to India's capability to host world-class events on a grand scale, they said. At Level-3 of the convention centre, a grand seating capacity for 7,000 people exists, making it even larger than the

seating capacity for approximately 5,500 in the iconic Sydney Opera House in Australia. This impressive feature establishes the IECC as a venue fit for hosting mega conferences, international summits, and cultural extravaganzas on a global scale.

The exhibition halls offer seven innovative spaces for showcasing products, innovations, and ideas. These state-of-the-art halls provide an ideal platform for exhibitors and companies to engage with their target audience, fostering business growth and networking opportunities.

Among its many exceptional features, the IECC boasts of a magnificent amphitheatre with a seating capacity of 3,000 individuals. *Contd on page 2*

TMC slams Centre for Manipur, BJP raises Bengal violence

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress continued its relentless attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for having failed to contain the situation in Manipur wondering when they would explain their conducts via a vis the condition of the women in the Northeastern State.

Alleging that in yet another case an eighteen year old girl was subjected to brutalities the Bengal ruling outfit on its twitter handle wrote on Sunday that they had reports of the girl being handed over to four armed men who later subjected her to gang rape.

The incident took place in East Manipur district on May 15, days after three women were paraded naked by rioters, a video of which went viral triggering waves of criticism throughout the country.

The TMC wrote, "The tragedy doesn't end for Manipur! An 18 year old girl was handed over to four armed men by women vigilantes. She was later assaulted and gang-raped in Imphal East in Manipur on May 15" adding "If such brutal cases are coming in the public eye after more than a month, what's still hidden must be truly gruesome".

Holding the Prime Minister, Home Minister and



the BJP's communal politics responsible for the ongoing situation in the Northeastern State, the party wondered when the Prime Minister and his government would take accountability for whatever was happening in Manipur.

"When will PM Narendra Modi, HM Amit Shah and (Manipur) Chief Minister N Biren Singh take accountability for the complete law and order failure?" the statement read. Meanwhile there was more political slugging in post-panchayat poll Bengal where the BJP on Sunday sent yet another central fact-finding team led by its MP Vinod Sonkar who on Sunday visited parts of Hooghly district meeting the victims of TMC violence at Tarakeswar, Arambagh etc.

"We have come here to see how the BJP men have been attacked, killed and injured,

politics." The TMC leader also asked as to why no central fact finding team was not visiting MP, UP or for that matter Manipur where atrocities on people and particularly women have breached the ceiling.

"They are talking about attacks on the tribal people in Bengal ... but it is the same BJP which did not invite President Droupadi Murmu, a tribal woman, in the inauguration of the new Parliament building ... it is the same BJP, one of whose leaders publicly urinated in the face of a tribal man in Madhya Pradesh ... they have no face to raise such issues," he said.

Meanwhile, CPI(M) State secretary Md Salim hit out at the BJP and the TMC for trying to create a binary in Bengal with the help of the media.

"The BJP is a spent force ... they are almost gone ... despite having 18 MPs and 70 MLAs -- some of who are regular travelers between the BJP and TMC --- they have managed to get only 22 percent votes whereas the Left has done remarkably well even in the face of massive violence to poll 21 percent votes ... it is out of this fear that these two parties are trying to create a binary with the help of the media to count us out ... but they will not succeed in their game plan," he said.

Reacting to the BJP central team's visit, TMC MP Shantanu Sen said that "such delegations are a regular affair in Bengal ... they have sent 190-195 such fact finding teams but have been able to do nothing ... they are just trying to remain afloat in the State politics because the BJP's vote percentage has suffered a good 16 percent fall --- from 38 percent in 2021 to 22 percent in 2023 they ... they are just trying to remain relevant in the State

Tension in Bareilly after 4 hurt in attack on Kanwariyas

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Communal tension prevailed in Bareilly after a group of kanwariyas were pelted with stones from the shrine of another community in Mohalla Jogi Nawada of Baradari area of the district.

The agitated mob vandalised two vehicles, including a police jeep, and some vehicles were also damaged in stone pelting. Four people were injured due to stone pelting. The situation was controlled after a heavy police force along with senior officers reached the spot.

Reports said that tension prevailed in Manauna village of Bareilly on Saturday night when the way of kanwariyas going to collect holy water was blocked by some local residents, including Bahujan Samaj Party district panchayat member Shamsad.

He accused the kanwariyas of setting new traditions as earlier they did not pass through the said route to collect holy water. The kanwariyas, however, claimed that they always took the route as earlier they did not pass through the said route to collect holy water. The kanwariyas, however, claimed that they always took the route as earlier they did not pass through the said route to collect holy water. The kanwariyas, however, claimed that they always took the route as earlier they did not pass through the said route to collect holy water.

route, they would not perform jalabhishek. The officials failed to resolve the dispute till late night.

According to sources, every year the kanwariyas from Manauna village go to Kachla ghat in Budaun to collect water. On Saturday, a group was formed under the leadership of Sanjay and Rajju Valmiki. On Saturday night, when they reached the Muslim-dominated area by their vehicles, Shamsad stopped them after which the dispute started.

Sub-Divisional Magistrate Govind Maurya kept trying to find a solution by talking to both sides. The kanwariyas said that they were being pressured to return, which was wrong. They said if the administration forced their return, they would not perform jalabhishek. The agitated kanwariyas also started raising slogans after sitting on the road.

Sources said that records were called from the police station to confirm the route of the kanwariyas, but even then the issue could not be resolved. The police said that the groups of kanwariyas were enrolled but details of the routes taken by them were not recorded.

Several UP leaders set to join BJP



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, in the midst of an intense drive to bolster its electoral strength ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, is all set to further expand its fold in Uttar Pradesh by welcoming several new party hoppers into its ranks.

According to party sources, all these leaders, along with some other politicians, are also expected to join the BJP. Earlier, Om Prakash Rajbhar, the chief of Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party, returned to the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance recently. Earlier, another OBC leader from Purvanchal, Dara Singh Chauhan, had resigned as a SP MLA to join the BJP.

During a recent visit to Lucknow, BJP national general secretary BL Santosh said that people who align with the party's ideology would be welcomed.

Flood threat over Delhi as Yamuna...

From Page 1

The rising water level prompted the administration to issue fresh warning on Sunday, urging people to vacate low-lying areas near the Yamuna, citing safety concerns. The Delhi Government has appealed to the public to remain vigilant and cooperate with the authorities during this critical time.

Delhi Flood and Irrigation minister Saurabh Bharaudwaj added that the water being released from the Hathnikund Barrage was more than 2 lakh cubic feet per second. According to the Water

Commission's estimates, the water level was likely to reach 206.7 metres by this evening.

About 41,000 people inhabit low-lying areas of Yamuna, of which about 27,000 were moved to safer locations, when the river breached its danger mark during second week of July. The rise in water level of river again is expected to impact rehabilitation of the affected families, the government said. The Yamuna has been in spate for over a week now, leading to flooding in several parts of the national capital. The primary reason behind the steady rise in the water level is the release of water from the Haryana barrage.

Bharaudwaj also inspected the Wazirabad water treatment

plant. This water treatment plant was among three such plants to get flooded a week back, leading to water supply problems in some parts of the capital. With the rising water levels in the Yamuna, Bhardwaj undertook this visit to assess the situation. Previously, the Water Treatment Plant had to be closed as water from the Yamuna had entered its premises. To prevent the recurrence of such issues, all necessary arrangements were thoroughly reviewed during the visit.

"The Delhi Jal Board has made embankments & reinforcement at vulnerable spots. Last time, water had seeped into the pumps and three water treatment plants had to be

closed. But this time the Jal Board administration was well prepared. People are still residing in the relief camps and the government has made all arrangements for them," the minister said.

Meanwhile, the Gautam Buddha Nagar administration has also issued a flood warning for low-lying regions along the Hindon as water discharge in the river increased on Sunday. Around 200 people from five villages have been evacuated and shifted to shelter homes after the alert was raised on Saturday.

The river is flowing below the danger mark of 205-metre in the district, bordering Delhi in western Uttar Pradesh, according to a senior offi-

cer. Around 200 people from five villages have been evacuated and shifted to shelter homes that have been set up by the administration to provide them accommodation, food and health care," Additional District Magistrate Atul Kumar said. "The Hindon is currently flowing at 200-metre, below the danger mark of 205-metre," said Kumar, who is also the nodal officer for flood relief work in Gautam Buddha Nagar. The district is located between Hindon and Yamuna rivers. The district recently witnessed floods along the Yamuna river banks, which submerged 550 hectares of low-lying land, and impacted thousands of people and animals.

41 Meiteis reach Assam...

From Page 1

"They are saying that they will stay here till the situation normalises," the SP said, adding that Assam Police is providing security to them.

Thousands of people from Meitei, Kuki and Hmar communities fled Manipur, and have been living in Assam since ethnic violence erupted in that State on May 3.

The Mizoram Government on Saturday reassured the Meitei community living in the State of safety and told them not to pay heed to rumours.

PM to launch swanky...

From Page 1

Equivalent to three PVR theatres combined, this grand amphitheatre sets the stage for captivating performances, cultural shows, and entertainment events, they said.

The convenience of visitors is a priority at the IECC, reflected in the provision of over 5,500 vehicle parking spaces. The ease of access through signal-free roads ensures that visitors can reach the venue without any hassle, they added.

For those who grew up in Delhi in the last millennium, Pragati Maidan (which translates to 'progress grounds') is virtually unrecognisable - gone are the pyramidal Nehru Pavilion, the Hall of Industries, the Hall of Nations, and, back in 2008, even the much-loved amusement park Appu Ghar. But the area has seen changes before too, given that the history of Pragati Maidan pre-dates independence.

Baghel first in line for CM post post Chh'garh...

सर्वजनिक सूचना मंत्रालय दिल्ली के निदेशानुसार, 2023-24 के लिए नए ग्राहकों को सूचना देना है।

From Page 1

There were 13 of us including the chief minister. I am still number 2 with an added designation. I am the Deputy CM, so I am sure a lot of people would be seeing it as a step up," he said.

"I was one of the ministers in the cabinet. Now I am one of the ministers who is also designated Deputy CM. I am

grateful to the party, very grateful to the party high command and Bhupesh bhai because with the consent and blessings of all, it would have happened," he told PTI over phone.

On whether all the issues were a thing of the past and the party were united in Chhattisgarh, Singhdeo claimed the leaders were united earlier as well.

"The issue (two-and-a-half years each CM tenure) was coming up repeatedly in the press so there was definitely that strain. It was difficult for Bhupesh bhai to reply all the time. It was very difficult for me to keep trying to reply to either the media or our associates (as to) when is it going to happen, what is going to happen, is there this two-and-a-half years thing, so it did weigh on us, certainly," the Congress leader said.

Now there are no two-and-a-half years, only four-five months are left for the elections, he noted and added the situation that existed earlier does not exist anymore. On whether he was actually promised a two-and-a-half years in the CM's post, Singhdeo said there are many discussions that take place behind closed doors.

"The high command has never said anything about this two and a half years (tenure) so I am in no position to make any comment. One has to maintain the dignity of discussions that take place behind closed doors," Singhdeo said.

Asked whether the polls would be fought under a "collective leadership", Singhdeo said the decision taken on June 28, when the leaders from the state met the party

top brass here, was that the polls will be "fought on a collective leadership which Bhupesh Baghel ji would lead".

"That is the situation and obviously if we win under the situation, he (Baghel) would be first in line to be considered for the chief minister," Singhdeo said.

Pressed further on his remark that Baghel will be first in line to be CM, the Chhattisgarh Deputy Chief Minister said, "Certainly. If you are the incumbent chief minister, for one you have not been removed, so the party maintains its belief in your being able to lead the team to victory and after you win, why should the captain be changed."

Asked whether he would also continue in the Deputy CM post if the Congress wins, Singhdeo said that is all for the high command to decide.

"Whatever responsibility that designate, we will accept them with full grace," he said. He asserted the government has performed well on many parameters.

There may be some shortcomings in terms of perceived promises which may not have been fulfilled but by and large the government has done quite well, he said.

"I would give a seven out of 10 rating and very good chances of coming back to governance again," Singhdeo said. Asked about the anti-incumbency factor, the Congress leader said anti-incumbency would have been there if there would have been lack of performance.

"Where there is performance then the sense of anti-incumbency is not there. There has been performance

on the front of the farmers, the forest dwellers, education, English medium schools, electricity concession, many initiatives in the urban areas too. In health, we have done quite well," he said.

Asked if he would be fighting the polls from Ambikapur again, Singhdeo said if the constituents of his seat would want him to contest then that would be his first priority and he would seek their views on that.

"I am in the process of doing that. Then the party has to accept me as the candidate, if they give me the ticket. First are the voters in the constituency and then the party. If both are there, then one will think of contesting, certainly" he said.

Asked with the captain and vice captain decided, is the team set to win the finals, Singhdeo said it is not just the captain and vice captain, it is the entire team.

"We have all the other senior players, all the other party workers, we have to do it together, like we did it last time. The more we do it together, the more success there will be," he said.

Singhdeo was appointed deputy chief minister last month. He and Chief Minister Baghel had been engaged in a power tussle since the party came to power in the state in 2018.

There was talk throughout the tenure that party leadership had promised that he and Baghel would hold the chief minister's post alternately for two-and-a-half years each. However, the party leadership never publicly said anything on this. The Congress is seeking to retain power in Chhattisgarh and is projecting unity in the party unit.

PM must step in to bring peace in...

From Page 1

Since then, the police have arrested six people.

"It's inhuman and quite a disturbing incident. I could not hold my tears seeing the video I have received. I am deeply pained and shocked," Sharmila told PTI in an exclusive interview from Bengaluru.

Sharmila who hailed from Manipur had been on hunger strike for 16 years demanding repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA). She was force-fed by food tubes during that period.

"It's clear that the State Government in Manipur has failed totally. And when a State cannot control the situation, why is the Prime Minister silent? He should protect the people of Manipur. If he is concerned about the suffering of the people of Manipur, he must

intervene... Like the people of Gujarat, the Manipuris also require his leadership," she said.

The 'Iron Lady' of Manipur demanded that Chief Minister N Biren Singh admit his failure and apologise to the people.

"The CM must talk to all 60 MLAs putting aside the differences. He must talk to them one-to-one and consider their opinions and decide how to stop the feeling of hatred between the two communities (Meitei and Kuki). That is the need of the hour," she said.

After the first arrest was made in the strip parade incident on July 20, the Chief Minister had said he will ensure strict action is taken against all the perpetrators, including considering the possibility of capital punishment.

Sharmila also felt that the

ban on the internet to curb the circulation of fake news and videos in the ethnic violence-hit state of Manipur did not help the situation in Manipur.

"I do not think this ban on the internet has helped in controlling violence in Manipur.

On the contrary, had the internet been working, the women (strip parade victims) could have got justice and the culprits would have been behind bars," she said.

Prime Minister Modi, who was accused by the Opposition of keeping mum on the Manipur situation for over two months, condemned the incident of parading the two women naked a day after the video surfaced.

Sharmila demanded that the culprits should be awarded life imprisonment with rigorous labour and without parole.

Cong stages silent protest..

From Page 1

Delhi Congress criticized the BJP's comparison of the situation in strife-torn Manipur - reeling from ethnic violence that has claimed numerous lives and left many injured since May 3 - with Rajasthan, where the Congress holds power.

Slamming the BJP for comparing the strife-torn Manipur with Rajasthan, Chaudhary said, "BJP should be ashamed of itself".

Scores of people have lost their lives and several others injured since the ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3. Many reports of rape-murder, burning of houses have surfaced now months after violence started.

Chaudhary condemned the BJP's attempt to deflect attention and underscored the party's determination to continue raising concerns about the attacks on the Constitution and demand accountability from the Central Government. Chaudhary said there have been "attacks on the Constitution" and the Congress will continue to raise the issues of unemployment and inflation inside as well as outside Parliament. Today, we have gathered here to raise our demand that the central government must reply to questions being raised on these issues, he claimed.

3-yr-old drowns in waterlogged house in Kirari

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a tragic incident, a three-year-old boy drowned in north Delhi's Kirari area with his family blaming it on the negligence of the administration. The deceased, identified as Arif, was the only brother among his five sisters. His father Ashraf Ali, a rickshaw puller, said his son was playing alone when the incident happened on Saturday evening. Earlier, three minor children died by drowning near Mukundpur in Delhi's north west district.



from the authorities concerned or local MLA and councillors came to meet them. The locals said that due to negligence of the administration, the whole area is waterlogged, several houses have become ponds, and the victim's house was one of them where water was logged.

"He went downstairs where there was water-logging and drowned," he said. The family used to live on the first floor of the house, which had two staircases. One of them is closed and they used the second staircase to come down. Ali was not at home, and the mother was sitting outside the home when Arif, who was alone on the first floor, went downstairs using the second staircase where water was standing.

The whole Kirari area is facing water-logging after heavy rain in Delhi. Lack of water drainage in the colony has become a significant problem, leading to water-logging. The area has witnessed deaths due to water logging in the recent past too. The locals said that even after the deaths, no officials

Holding the AAP government responsible for the death, Delhi BJP head Virendra Sachdeva demanded an immediate compensation of Rs. 25 lakh to family from Arvind Kejriwal government.

"It is horrifying to know of the death of a child in his own house in the national capital's Janta Enclave in Kirari. What is more shocking in the matter are the reports from Janta Enclave that local authorities at the direction of the AAP MLA Rituraj have forced the father of the child Ashraf to go back to his native place in Bihar," he said.

'Bill seeking to replace Delhi ordinance unconstitutional'

Raghav writes to RS chairman Dhankhar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AP MP Raghav Chadha has written to Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday, urging him not to allow a bill that seeks to replace the Centre's ordinance on control over administrative services in Delhi to be introduced in the Upper House of Parliament. In his letter to Dhankhar, Chadha termed the Bill "unconstitutional" and urged the Rajya Sabha chairman to direct the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre to withdraw it and "save the Constitution".

The bill seeking to replace the ordinance is likely to be introduced by the Centre in Parliament during the ongoing Monsoon session.

"A Constitution bench of the Supreme Court unanimously held that as a matter of constitutional requirement, the civil servants serving in the Government of NCT of Delhi are answerable to the elected arm of the government i.e. The elected council of ministers presided over by the chief minister," Chadha said in his letter to Dhankhar.

This link of accountability was held to be "crucial" to a democratic and popularly accountable model of government, he added.



However, in one single stroke, the ordinance has undone this model by seizing this control again from the duly elected government of Delhi and vesting it in the hands of the LG, the Rajya Sabha MP said.

"The ordinance's design is evident i.e. To strip the Government of NCT of Delhi down to only its elected arm -- enjoying the mandate of the people of Delhi, but bereft of the governing apparatus necessary for meeting that mandate," he alleged.

This has left the Delhi government "in a crisis of administration, put day-to-day governance in jeopardy and led the civil service to stall, disobey and contradict the elected government's orders," Chadha claimed.

Termining the ordinance "blatantly unconstitutional", he contended that the Bill

seeking to replace it is "impermissible" on the face of it as by seeking to take away the control over services from the Delhi government, contrary to the apex court's decision, the ordinance has lost its legal validity. No law can be made to nullify the court's decision without changing the basis of that decision, Chadha argued.

"The ordinance does not change the basis of the Supreme Court's decision, which is the Constitution itself," he said.

Chadha noted that Article 239A(7)(a) of the Constitution empowers Parliament to frame a law to "give effect to" or "supplement" the provisions contained in Article 239A.

"In conclusion, any law which the Parliament may make needs to supplement the provisions of Article 239A and for only matters inciden-

tal or consequential to those provisions. Therefore, the proposed Bill which contains provisions contrary to the provisions of Article 239A is not a valid exercise of the Parliament's legislative competence," the AAP leader said.

Criticising the AAP, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said that Delhi has three Rajya Sabha MPs but the letter has been written by a Rajya Sabha MP from Punjab. Sachdeva has said that having failed to defeat the Bill through political numbers or through a Court Stay the AAP leader has today written to the Rajya Sabha Chairman whose directive to shift to proper accommodation was defied by him a couple of months ago.

The Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said that Vice President has already made it clear that it is permissible to lay the bill. "The letter is a political drama. His boss Arvind Kejriwal has told him to write a letter on Ordinance," he said. "Kejriwal is cribbing that services matter should be under the Delhi government as officials or bureaucrats do not listen to the elected government. The point is why bureaucrats allowed to happen excise scam, renovation scam and advertisement scams," he added.

Jamia to soon start medical college: VC



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) Vice Chancellor Prof. Najma Akhtar on Sunday announced the Centre has granted permission to start a medical college in JMI. She was addressing at the JMI centenary year convocation. Akhtar announced that the university plans to soon establish an international campus in the Middle East.

Jamia celebrated its centenary year convocation ceremony today at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar was the Chief Guest of the celebration while the convocation was chaired by the Union Education Minister, Dharmendra Pradhan.

"We have dentistry, physiotherapy, first aid health centres, but a medical college has been missing in Jamia. As a VC, I have always requested for a medical college, on behalf of my students and faculty. We requested the government of India for the same, and now I am happy to announce that JMI has been granted the permission to establish a medical college at the campus," Prof. Akhtar announced.

"Our hard work has been successful. Our dream of several years has come true today. I would like to thank the Prime Minister, Education Minister, President and the Vice President of our country for helping us

with this," she stated.

Around 12,500 students including gold medallists who passed in the year 2019 and 2020 would be awarded degrees and diplomas during the convocation. Speaking on the occasion, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said Education is the breath of our democratic life. Look upon education as the chief informative force of life. It is education that can give us a common vision of the future and generate in us the intellectual and moral energy. Education alone can preserve the old values worth preserving.

"Zakir Husain always said education gives us the vision about which old values are worth holding on to and which ones to let go of. Education alone can give new values to those striving for the future," he added. Pradhan said the university had a huge role in the freedom movement of the country and that it will hold the first position in providing intellectual leadership in the next 25 years.

"Jamia was established to take the movement of our independence ahead. We have completed 75 years of independence and the leadership of Jamia had a huge contribution towards it. In the next 25 years of country's 'Amrit Kaal', I have no doubt that Jamia will hold the first position in providing intellectual leadership," he said.

Man dies in police custody in Subhash Place

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A man wanted in 18 cases died in police custody under mysterious circumstances in Delhi's Subhash Place police station on Sunday. The police said the deceased, identified as Sheikh Sahadat, 36, died of natural causes. The incident took place

around 6.30 am. The deceased, Sheikh Sahadat, was a resident of Delhi's Jahangirpuri. He, along with four others, was arrested on Saturday, a senior police officer said.

Sahadat was previously involved in more than 18 criminal cases, police said. The accused were produced before a court, which sent

Sahadat to police custody for a day, whereas the others were remanded in judicial custody, the officer said.

An FIR was lodged against them under sections 25, 35, 54, 59 Arms Act at police station Subhash Place on July 21.

"The deceased, along with four others, was arrested on July 22. The accused persons were produced before the

court, and accused Sheikh Shadat was on PC remand for one day for the sake of the investigation of the case, whereas the others were sent to judicial custody," said the official. A medical examination of the accused was conducted on Saturday evening. Subsequently, he was taken to the police station and lodged in the lockup, police said.



Around 6.30 am, an on-duty police personnel noticed heavy breathing by Sahadat. He informed the duty officer and Sahadat was rushed to the BSA hospital, where he was declared brought dead, police said. The family of the deceased has alleged that he was murdered. The police have initiated an inquiry into the matter.

Atishi: Responsibility of youth to build better fair, egalitarian society



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Higher Education Minister Atishi attended the orientation of National Law University (NLU), on Sunday. She congratulated students and parents for making it to one of the most prestigious law universities across the country. While interacting with the students and motivating them to utilize the 5 years of college meaningfully, Atishi said the responsibility of building a better, fair, and egalitarian society lies with every youth of the country, including recently inducted students of the National Law University (NLU).

Speaking at the orientation programme of the NLU, Atishi said as a law student, it is crucial to keep in mind the

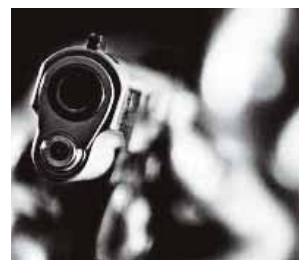
profound significance of the country's Constitution.

"Five years at the NLU will give students an opportunity to unleash their potential, broaden their horizons, and acquire legal expertise to serve the country. It is one of the world's top institutions - raising the lawyers, judges and CJs for India's future," Atishi said.

She further stated that the Delhi government is making all possible efforts to ensure better facilities for students studying in Delhi's higher education institutions.

"As a government, it is our responsibility to ensure all world-class facilities for students and students' responsibility is to work hard to contribute towards the nation with their expertise, she added.

For the academic year 2023, about 20,000 students appeared in the competitive examination - All India Law Entrance Test (AILET). 123 students have joined through merit. This includes students from 18 states of India and foreign students from the USA, Canada, and Nepal. There are 51 female and 72 male students in this year's batch.



2 rob ₹23,000 from medical shop in Rohini

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Two unidentified persons robbed Rs 23,000 from a medical shop in Rohini Sector-7 area, police said on Sunday.

On Saturday at 10:48 pm, North Rohini police station received information regarding an incident of robbery with a fire shot by two persons at a medical store, a senior police officer said.

Police reached the spot at Rohini Sector-7 and came to know that two persons on a motorcycle came to the medical store, robbed Rs 23,000 from the employee and also opened fire at the window to frighten him, the officer said.

After the incident, both the robbers escaped. A case has been registered and investigation is underway to nab the accused persons, police added.

Goal to plant 52 lakh trees this year, says Min

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Sunday commenced a tree plantation festival (Van Mahotsav) at the Dwarka Mela Ground in West Delhi with the launch of a portal to provide real-time updates on tree plantation progress to Delhi residents.

Emphasising the government's commitment to combat pollution, Environment Minister Gopal Rai said the goal is to plant 52 lakh trees this year, in addition to the 50

shrubs by the New Delhi Municipal Council. Free medicinal plants were distributed to all participants during the festival.

The newly launched Green Action Plan Portal (<https://gap.Eforest.Delhi.Gov.In/>) enables Delhiites to access information on tree planting locations and provide feedback on the planted trees. The initiative also includes provisions for third-party audit reports to monitor tree growth and survival rates.

Former MP Mahabal Mishra and MLAs of West



Delhi Lok Sabha constituency Gulab Singh, Rajkumari Dhillon, Rajesh Rishi, Dhanwati Chandela, Naresh

Baliyan and Girish Soni were present in the programme.

The Kejriwal government has set a target of planting more than 52 lakh saplings this year. Apart from this, 50 lakh plants / shrubs will be planted by NDMC. Free medicinal plants were also distributed by the department to all the people present in the program.

Rai said, "The Van Mahotsav program's sole objective is for everyone to work together to make the tree-planting campaign a successful one."

Man duped of ₹99K on pretext of online hospital registration, accused arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 30-year-old man was arrested for allegedly defrauding a person by sending a link to his mobile number requesting registration fee payment for hospital appointment, police said on Sunday.

The accused has been identified as Raj Gupta, a resident of Loni in Ghaziabad, UP, they said. On June 8, Dev Sagar Singh lodged a complaint against unidentified persons regarding online

fraud of Rs 99,999.

He alleged that in order to get an appointment in a hospital, he found a number on the Internet. When he contacted that number, the person at the other end asked him to pay Rs 10 as registration fee. The complainant paid the amount, a senior police officer said.

Later, the suspect sent him another link through WhatsApp and requested Singh to follow the link to fix his appointment. The complainant clicked the link only

to realise that Rs 99,999 were debited from his bank account, the officer said.

During the investigation, the cheated amount was found to be credited into the account of Gupta. The registered mobile number was found deactivated. On Wednesday, the location of the accused was traced to Loni in Ghaziabad, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Manoj C said. Later, Gupta was apprehended and taken into police custody, the DCP said.

Ensure regular supply of drinking water to Bhalswa residents: HC to DJB

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) to ensure regular supply of fresh drinking water to the inhabitants of Bhalswa resettlement colony here which is located near a landfill. A bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Sanjeev Narula granted four weeks' time to the counsel for the DJB to file a detailed status report in the matter. Bhalswa resettlement colony is situated in North West part of Delhi, adjacent to Bhalswa landfill and around 20,000 people are residing in the colony.

"In the meanwhile, DJB shall ensure regular supply of fresh drinking water to Bhalswa resettlement colony," the bench said. The high court was hearing a plea seeking to provide basic amenities, including sanitation, drinking water, health and education services, to the inhabitants of Bhalswa resettlement colony which is located near the landfill leaving the whole area polluted.

It had earlier sought responses from the Delhi government, municipal corporation, DJB, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and other authorities on the petition.



During the hearing on Friday, the counsel for DJB submitted before the court that the board has ensured regular supply of fresh drinking water to the colony and in case of any interruptions in the pipeline supply, it supplies water tankers in the area, as and when the need arises. The high court also granted four weeks' time to NHRC and other authorities to file their replies to the petition.

The plea said resettlement in Bhalswa was done in 2000 to 2002 from 11 places in Delhi -- Gautampuri Yamuna Pusta, East of Kailash Gadh, Jahangirpuri, Gopalpur, Seelampur, Dakshinpur, Preet Vihar, Ashok Vihar, Rohini, ISBT and Nizamuddin Barapullah. Petitioner Pushpa, a Delhi resident, said the purpose of resettlement is to ensure better and systematic way of living to the resettled people.

Bail can't be refused as indirect punishment: Court on graft case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court has said bail cannot be refused as an indirect process of punishing an accused before he is convicted," the judge said in the order passed on July 17.

The judge also noted that the accused was in judicial custody for more than a month and the audio and video recordings of the alleged transaction were already in the possession of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). She noted that the accused was a public servant and had no previous involvement in any such matter, though he was under suspension on account of this case. "In such a scenario, the

apprehension of the CBI that the accused may flee from justice or influence the witnesses is without any basis. Moreover, if the accused is found misusing bail by indulging in any such acts, the CBI may approach this court for cancellation of bail," the judge said.

The judge granted the relief to the accused on a bail bond of Rs 50,000 with two sureties of a like amount and directed that the accused will not leave the country without the court's permission nor will he contact or influence the witnesses in any manner and will cooperate in the investigation.

25-yr-old man held for selling banned Chinese manjha

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 25-year-old man was arrested from northeast Delhi's Jafrabad area for allegedly dealing in Chinese manjha, police said on Sunday.

Based on a tip-off, a trap was laid near the Madina Masjid here on Saturday and Zakhir was caught red-handed selling the banned kite string. A total of 60 rolls of the Chinese Manjha were recovered from him, the police said.

Efforts are being made to trace the source from where Zakhir illegally procured the kite string, Deputy

Commissioner of Police (North East) Joy Tirkey said.

The Delhi Police has launched a crackdown on those illegally selling Chinese Manjha and its chief Sanjay Arora on Saturday stressed the need for consistent and deterrent action while citing "unsatisfactory" seizure.

The police took legal action against 44 people and seized 120 rolls of Chinese Manjha in the national capital on Wednesday and Thursday -- the first two days of the drive, officials said.

This comes days after a 7-year-old girl, who was heading to a swimming class along with

her father on a scooter, died after a stray kite string slit her throat.

According to data for July 19 and 20, police said they have warned 217 traders and visited over 300 markets so far to contain and curb the usage of Chinese kite strings. Kite-flying picks up traditionally in the run-up to Independence Day, but several injuries and deaths are also reported due to it every year.

In 2017, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned Chinese Manjha in the national capital as it posed a risk to people and animals by cutting through their skin.

NSA Doval to discuss Ukraine, Ladakh situation in BRICS meet

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

National Security Advisor(NSA)Ajit Doval is likely to discuss the issue of tension still prevailing at the border in Ladakh and ongoing Ukraine conflict with his Chinese and Russian counterparts in South Africa on Monday. He is there to take part in the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa(BRICS) NSA's meet in Johannesburg.

The high-profile meet takes place before the BRICS summit there on August 22-24. Russian President Vladimir Putin will not travel to South Africa for the summit. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also not likely to go there. He may take part in the parleys in the virtual mode, sources said here on Sunday.

As regards, Doval's visit, they said he will meet senior Chinese diplomat Yang Jiechi and Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of Russian Security Council.

The meeting will be attended by special invitees like United Arab Emirates(UAE)National



Security Advisor Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Saudi Arabia NSA Musaad bin Mohammed Al Aiban.

The agenda of the BRICS NSA meeting is to discuss global issues like the Ukraine war, Indo-Pacific, religious radicalization and terrorism.

As tension still prevails at the Line of Actual Control(LAC)in eastern Ladakh, Doval and Jiechi may discuss ways to speed up the process of disengagement from the remaining two or three friction points.

India has all along maintained that status quo ante as it

prevailed before May 2020 at the LAC in Eastern Ladakh has to be restored for normalising ties between the two countries.

Given the present situation there, more than 50,000 troops each from both the sides are facing each other at the LAC in Ladakh leading to tension.

The Chinese army has reportedly increased deployment in areas across the Daulet Beg Oldi sector and is still not allowing the Indian Army to legitimately patrol Depsang Bulge area as well as Charding Ninglung Nulhak (CNN) junction in Demchok.

Besides holding talks with

the Chinese diplomat, Doval will also hold parleys with his Russian counterpart besides those of the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

They are likely to discuss the impact of the ongoing Ukraine conflict on the supply chains.

Doval is likely to update Patrushev about the situation at the LAC and the Indo-Pacific, sources said. The politically unstable situation in Afghanistan and its impact on terrorism emanating from the Af-Pak region will also figure prominently in the BRICS NSA meeting.

In face of erratic climate, Govt mulls setting up rain watch towers in villages

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

With the climate becoming erratic due to global warming as evident in high intensity heat waves or extreme rainfalls leading to floods in various pockets of the country, the Government is considering if rain watch tower can be set up in every village and weather stations at the development block level, so that the authorities can get precise information about the weather.

"There should be a rain watch tower in every village, weather stations can be set up at the development block level, so that the government can get precise information about the weather," Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar shared his idea at an event held here recently to launch Weather Information Network Data Systems (WINDS) portal and AIDE mobile app and unveiling of Yield Estimation System, based on Technology (YES-TECH) Manual.

On the occasion, Kiren Rijiju, Union Minister of Earth Sciences pitched for adapting agriculture to climate change with a "responsive and appropriate scientific mechanism."



He cautioned that "unless we are prepared to face the grave challenges, the consequences can be grave."

Rijiju said that the impact of climate change on agriculture is becoming more visible. "In our childhood, apple crops grew in Shimla, a few decades later Kinnaur emerged as the apple growing belt and now apple crop is shifting towards the even higher altitude Lahaul-Spiti region," he said, matter of factly. The Minister stressed that changes in the agriculture sector through sci-

ence and technology are very important. "The importance of all these is even more in the era of climate change."

A senior official from the Union Agriculture Ministry explained that through WINDS, crucial weather related information and data will be available to the farmers. "Keeping in view the challenges of obtaining accurate meteorological data from inadequate infrastructure coupled with climate change threats, the WINDS initiative is laying emphasis on setting

up a strong network of weather stations. Through this initiative, the target is to establish a wide network of weather stations at the block and gram panchayat level," he said.

The official further informed that this strategic approach will ensure widespread access to accurate and timely weather data. The goal is to bridge the gap in weather information availability and empower decision makers, farmers and stakeholders at the grassroots level.

NIA chargesheets 3 ultras, 6 BKI, KTF terrorists drug suppliers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday said it has filed a chargesheet against three notorious 'listed individual terrorists' and six others associated with banned terror outfits, Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) gangsters turned terrorists and drug smugglers-suppliers.

The three notorious listed individual terrorists are Harwinder Singh Sandhu alias Rinda and Lakhbir Singh Sandhu alias Landa, both of BKI and Arshdeep Singh alias

Arsh Dala of KTF are all based abroad, where they have created their own networks of operatives to carry out terror activities in India. They have close

contacts with drug smugglers/Khalistani operatives in Pakistan and other countries, the NIA said.

"Through this complex network of operatives based abroad, they have been recruiting, motivating and handling their associates in India to carry out terrorist activities, extortion and cross-border smuggling of weapons and drugs into India. They also have linkages with major gangs operating in North India, including local gangsters, organized criminal syndicates and networks," the agency said in a statement.

Investigations have also revealed a complex mechanism of fundraising for the BKI and KTF. The funds were being routed to India based associates

through both, informal channels as well as formal channels with layering and fund provisioning. MTSS or other means were being used in a way that the identity of the real sender or receiver of funds was completely masked, it said.

NIA is also investigating the links of 16 other absconding and arrested accused associated with the BKI and KTF.

A former gangster, Harwinder Singh Sandhu alias Rinda is now a very important BKI member and Khalistani operative. In 2018/19, he fled to Pakistan illegally and is currently living there under the patronage of ISI, and is involved in commission of terrorist activities against India, it said.

Rinda is involved in vari-



ous offences like smuggling of arms, ammunition explosives and drugs into Indian territory from Pakistan, recruitment of BKI operatives, murders, raising funds for BKI through extortion in Punjab and

Maharashtra. He has been involved in many terrorist activities, including the RPG attack on Punjab Police Intelligence Headquarters in May 2022, and was declared as an 'individual terrorist in 2023

by the Centre.

Arshdeep Singh alias Arsh Dala of Moga, Punjab was an infamous gangster in India who left for Canada. In Canada, Dala came in contact with Hardeep Singh Nijjar who was the chief of banned terrorist organization KTF.

The duo engaged in recruitment of youth and formation of terrorist gangs for carrying out extortion for raising funds for KTF and for carrying out targeted killing of businessmen and leaders of particular communities in Punjab. Dala has also been declared an 'individual terrorist'.

Lakhbir Singh Sandhu alias Landa of Tarn Taran was initially involved in criminal and gangster related activities. In

2017, he left for Canada and continued his activities from there. In the meantime, he came in contact with BKI terrorist Harwinder Singh Sandhu alias Rinda and started working for the latter and BKI.

Landa has been named as the main accused in a number of terrorist incidents, including RPG attack on Punjab Police Intelligence Headquarters in May 2022 and RPG attack on Sarhali Police station in Tarn Taran in December, 2022. He was also the mastermind of the conspiracy to kill Punjab Police SI Dilbagh Singh in August, 2022.

Other foreign based BKI nodes chargesheeted by NIA are Harjot Singh (resident of Punjab and currently based in USA); Kashmir Singh

Galwadi, (resident of Punjab and an absconding accused of Nabha Jailbreak case suspected to be presently based in Nepal) and Tarsem Singh, brother of Landa, and is currently in Dubai.

Gurjant Singh of Punjab and currently in Australia, is amongst the foreign based nodes of KTF who has been chargesheeted.

Other accused chargesheeted by NIA are Deepak Ranga and Lucky Khokhar alias Denis, who were recruited by foreign based handlers for carrying out terror activities in India. Ranga was handled by Rinda and Landa for carrying out the RPG attack on Punjab Police Intelligence Headquarters, Mohali, Punjab in May 2022.

AIPCMA, FORDA to oppose NMC on new faculty move



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The medical fraternity from government and private sector under the umbrella of All India Pre and Para Clinical Medicos Association (AIPCMA) and the Federation of Resident Doctors Association (FORDA) has joined hands to oppose the National Medical Commission (NMC) move allowing the non-medical postgraduates as faculties in para-clinical subjects. They have demanded that only medical postgraduates be appointed as teachers in medical colleges.

The protesting doctors are of the view that medical educators must possess applied medical knowledge and a deep understanding of patient care. They also feel that besides compromising the quality, allowing the M.Sc students to become faculty in medical colleges (pre and paraclinical) will also deter MBBS aspirants from entering into the sector.

Dr Sarvesh Pandey, General Secretary of FORDA said that why non medicos should teach and train for a degree that deals with human life. It is like playing with human life. Moreover, there is no shortage of MBBS, MD / MS doctors.

"To protest the NMC move, we took out a protest rally

march on Sunday starting from Jantar Mantar to Raj Ghat. We are hopeful that Union Health Minister Mansukh Madaviya will intervene in the matter and provide us justice," said Dr Pandey.

Dr Anoop Singh Gurjar, General Secretary of AIPCMA pointed out that these non-medical teachers, often come with backgrounds in BSc, MSc, or PhDs but lacking medical education, they fail to effectively teach subjects like Anatomy, Pharmacology, and Biochemistry.

Though the NMC in its order in Medical Institution Regulation 2022 has said that only 15% of faculties in these departments may be non-medical postgraduates, the non-medical teachers have filed a suit in the Supreme Court challenging the NMC's decision.

While the court has declined to entertain the appeal, it has requested clarifications from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and NMC during the forthcoming hearing in July. Now the ball is in the court of NMC and the Health Ministry. The FORDA and AIPCMA representatives said that the deciding authorities should look into the harmful impact that the move will have in the long run.

NIA raids houses of 5 absconding POs in TN

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday raided the homes of five absconding Proclaimed Offenders (POs) and suspects across 21 locations in Tamil Nadu in the PFI conspiracy case relating to the brutal assassination of a man for protesting against forcible conversions by the banned outfit.

The statewide raids in the Ramalingam murder PFI conspiracy case were conducted at the residential premises of several functionaries of the Popular Front of India (PFI), including Nellai Mubarak, who is also the State President of the SDPI, the NIA said in a statement.

Others whose houses were searched included absconding accused Mohammed Ali Jinna, Abdul Majith, Bhurkhanudeen, Shahul Hameed and Nafeel Hassan.

NIA has announced a reward of Rs 5 lakhs each to anyone providing information leading to the arrest of any of the five proclaimed absconders.



The prosecution of others already arrested in the case is currently underway.

Earlier, the NIA had filed a chargesheet against 18 accused persons, including the five absconding accused persons, on August 2, 2019 before the NIA Special Court, Chennai.

The NIA Special Court, Chennai, had declared these five absconding accused persons as Proclaimed Offenders.

The Sunday raids in Thanjavur, Madurai, Tirunelveli, Tirupur, Villupuram, Trichy, Pudukottai, Coimbatore and Mayiladuthurai led to the seizure of several digital devices (mobile phones, SIM cards

and memory cards) and documents, the agency said.

"Ramalingam was brutally murdered on February 5, 2019 in Paku Vinayakam Thoppu, Thanjavur by members and office bearers of the PFI, which had conspired the assassination," the NIA said.

The agency further said, "The accused persons had avenged Ramalingam by killing him in an extremely violent jihadi manner as he objected to the forcible conversion of underprivileged persons by Dawah Team / Proselytization team dispatched from Arivagam, Theni (now attached as proceeds of terrorism under section 25 of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967)."

According to NIA investigations, the violence was instigated to instil fear among the opponents of the outfit, declared as an 'unlawful association' under U(A) P A by the Centre on September 28, 2022, and to drive a wedge between the communities by inciting communal hatred and violence, it added.

No peace in Manipur till CM Biren remains: Cong

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress claimed on Sunday that there would be no movement towards peace in Manipur as long as N Biren Singh remains the chief minister as it urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to act now and not "deflect, distort and defame to cover up" the "collapse of the so-called double engine governance" in the northeastern state.

The opposition party's attack came over a media report that claimed that an 18-year-old woman, who was abducted, assaulted and gang-raped in Manipur's Imphal East district on May 15, approached the police on July 21, after which a zero First Information Report (FIR) was registered.

In a tweet, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "Every passing day as the truth of the horror of Manipur continues to trickle out, it is clear that: The law and order in the state has collapsed. Mobs, armed vigilantes and insurgent groups are running amok. Women and families have faced



the worst, unimaginable atrocities."

The administration is not only complicit in the violence but has actively fanned hate, he alleged.

Ramesh said the social fabric of the state has been completely torn apart with a total breakdown of trust between communities. "There won't be any justice or movement towards peace as long as Biren Singh remains CM. The time has long past gone for the Prime Minister to act. He must ACT NOW and not deflect, distort and defame to cover up collapse of the so-called double engine governance in

Manipur," the Congress leader said on Twitter.

More than 160 people have lost their lives and several have been injured since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, when a "Tribal Solidarity March" was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Tension further mounted on Wednesday after a video purportedly shot on May 4 surfaced online, showing two women from one of the warring communities being paraded naked by a group of men from the other side.

Rumours, fake news major menace fuelling violence in Manipur: Officials

PTI ■ IMPHAL

The ethnic violence in Manipur that erupted on May 3 and has left over 160 dead has been largely fuelled by rumours and fake news, according to officials from various security agencies who have been monitoring the situation in the restive north-eastern state.

The despicable May 4 incident in Kangpokpi district, where two women were paraded naked and assaulted by several people, was among the spate of sexual attacks that occurred after a picture of a body wrapped in polythene was circulated in the Imphal valley with a false claim that the

victim had been murdered by tribals in Churachandpur.

The picture was later found to be that of a woman murdered in the national capital but the fire had engulfed the valley by that time, and what was witnessed the next day put humanity to shame, says an official while referring to the video of the Kangpokpi incident that appeared on social media last week and has sparked massive outrage in the country.

On the same day, barely 30 km away, two more women in their 20s were brutally raped and murdered.

The lawlessness because of the fake picture spread like jungle fire and was one of the rea-



sions for the state government to shut down the Internet on May 3, the officials said.

A section of parties and activists have opposed the suspension of the Internet. Refusing to interfere, the Supreme Court on July 17 asked the Manipur government to raise its grievance

before the high court against the HC's earlier order on a limited restoration of the Internet in the state.

Analysis by various security agencies engaged in dousing the fire in Manipur, which has been on the boil since May 3, has led to the conclusion that there is "no control on fake or

one-sided news being circulated even by local newspapers".

Citing a recent example, they said one of the prominent dailies had claimed that tribal men, armed with weapons, had planned to attack the members of the majority community at Kwatha village of Chandel district.

Alarmed by the news report, Manipur police swung into action, only to find that the news report was false.

The police issued a statement saying that there was no attempt to burn any village as reported in some local dailies and again appealed that only verified information in sensitive cases should be published. Police have dedicated

'Rumour Free Number' 9233522822 for verifying any information emerging either through social media or word of mouth and checking the spread of disinformation.

Another video showing tribal youths marching in Churachandpur a few days back was circulated in the valley with subtitles claiming that the tribals will snatch women and children from the majority community. However, since the video was in Mizo language, which is the most widely spoken of the Kuki-Chin areas, some anti-social elements took advantage and put subtitles to raise tempers in the Imphal valley, where Manipuri Meiteilon is generally spoken.

Exchange of ideas can enhance devotee services: Gahininath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Co-chairman of Shri Vitthal-Rukmini Mandir Samiti Temple, Pandharpur, Gahininath Maharaj Ausekar said that the exchange of ideas can enhance devotee services further and praised the organisers of three-day International Temples Convention and Expo (ITCX)-2023 in this holy city for creating a substantial platform to facilitate networking between temple organisations. In a temple talk session on the second day at Rudraksh Convention Centre (Sagra) here on Sunday, he said that the 1300-year-old Vitthal Rukmini Mandir has been Pandharpur's most visited pilgrimage site and the Mandir Samiti has shown exceptional dedication towards serving pilgrims through the years.

During the day, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis was also scheduled to address a special session but due to some unavoidable reasons he could not arrive here. Chairman of ITCX and Member of Maharashtra Legislative Council Prasad Lad, founder of Temple Connect and ITCX-2023 Gresh Kulkarni and Biswanath Patnaik who pledged Rs 250 crore for UK Jagannath Temple felicitated some temple heads representing different religions, including Vivek Muni Maharaj, Buddhist monk Guruswamy, Gahininath Maharaj Ausekar and social worker Manish Mishra.

According to Gahininath Maharaj, with a 15-member committee and a 250-300 member management team, the Mandir Samiti has worked very hard to provide facilities for devotees who travel miles in order to make their darshan experience and stay comfort-



Temple heads being felicitated at ITCX-2023 in Varanasi on Sunday.

able.

"Close to one lakh pilgrims visit the temple each day, so managing their food, water, health and sanitation is of utmost importance to us. Our management team also ensures that the line follows due course and no member jumps lines causing disruption. Years ago, there was no arrangement for pilgrims to wait, and they had to do so in the scorching heat devoid of any shade. These people come to the temple without any expectations and solely with the intention of darshan. That is why we are doing everything in our capacity to provide comfort to each and every devotee," he said.

While delivering a temple talk on the subject of 'temples - an embodiment of peace, harmony and discipline', the Founder and Chairman of Blossom Public School, Thanjavur (Tamil Nadu) Alagu Alagappan said that a peaceful world is one that is free from

hunger, hatred, mistrust, and poverty. "Violence, hatred and discrimination are never parts of a peaceful world. Any place of worship has the potential to achieve this world, and a temple is no exception. Every temple is an embodiment of equality, a storehouse of peace and a harbinger of harmony," he said.

According to him, in a spiritually starved and morally bankrupt society, temples play an important role in bringing forth a sense of spirituality and morality while serving as a constant reminder to remain human in all that we do. They make every human being more disciplined for the world to become a better place to live. We talk about air and water purifiers.

However, we need heart and mind purifiers. And temples can purify our hearts and minds - foster right thinking and protect humanity from all kinds of degradation, he

added.

Delivering his views on 'cleaning and hygiene in the temple ecosystem', Director of Building Care, Diversey Kiran Rao said that it is an honour for Diversey to be able to create and ensure culture heritage protection through our consolidated programmes and solutions using environmentally sustainable products that ensure high levels of sanitisation and hygiene.

"The temple hygiene programme will ensure that together we can enhance and beautify our temples that are the fabric of society and a way to enlighten our future generations," Kiran Rao added. Sanjay Dighe, CEO, Krystal Integrated Services expressed his views on 'temple security, housekeeping, crowd management and operational systems' and said that our main focus is to offer fully customised services to temple organisations of all sizes.

Web portal for claiming subsidy on electric vehicles soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The government will soon launch a web portal that will facilitate application and claiming of subsidy on electric vehicles (EVs). According to information received from the RTO here last year the number of electric two-wheelers registered in the district was 241 which has increased to 702 in the first six months this year. Similarly, the number of electric cars has increased from four to 54.

Assistant RTO (admin), Rajeev Chaturvedi said the government is going to provide facilities to promote the sale of electric vehicles and preparations are being made to launch a portal by the Transport department. A subsidy of ₹5,000 will be given to those buying electric two-wheelers and ₹1 lakh on car, he said.

After the launch of the portal, buyers will have to apply on the portal for subsidy. The subsidy will be transferred after five-level checking right from the dealer to the

transport commissioner, Chaturvedi said adding that registration is also being done free of cost.

An EV dealer Dev Tiwari said e-scooty costing between ₹65,000 and ₹1.5 lakh is becoming quite popular in the city. He added any EV that has maximum speed limit of 30 kmph does not require registration at RTO. According to the information received from the RTO office, electric cars ranging from ₹10-30 lakh have been registered in the city.

SUSPENSION RECOMMENDED: The authorities of Allahabad University have written to the Bar Council of India (BCI) recommending suspension of registration of two former law students of the varsity, Ajay Yadav Samrat and Atendra Singh.

AU claims Yadav and Singh were among the main conspirators behind the July 12 violence in university following the death of a student Ashutosh Dubey on the campus on July 11. Yadav along with another student leader Jitendra Dhanraj was arrested and sent to jail in

this regard.

In a letter to BCI, AU chief proctor Rakesh Singh has also given information about the case filed against them and the action being initiated by the varsity regarding withdrawing their degrees.

AU Public Relations Officer (PRO) Prof Jaya Kapoor said a request has been sent by AU to suspend the registration or registration process of the two former law graduate students in the Bar Council. The letter has been sent as a formal information and request to the Bar Council against the two former students who are facing disciplinary proceedings.

Meanwhile, AU has suspended a research scholar of the department of Political Science, Manish Kumar for staging a sit-in without permission and inviting former IPS officer Amitabh Thakur to the campus. Issuing a show cause notice to Kumar, AU administration has sought a reply from him within seven days.

Protesting this action, student leaders staged a demon-

stration at the Students' Union building and demanded roll back of the decision.

Meanwhile continuing with their protest on the campus of Allahabad University against the 'dictatorial' attitude of the varsity authorities and seeking justice for Ashutosh Dubey, the student who recently died, student leaders of AU wrote a letter to the President with their blood.

The agitated student leaders said that they want to apprise the visitor (President) of the prevailing conditions at this central university and that she should take action against the varsity authorities.

The representation of student leaders mentions that the vice-chancellor is 'illegally' appointed, fees has been increased and the student union has been defunct for the past many years. "We have written the letter using our blood and apprised the president, chief justice of India and the prime minister about the dictatorship of the university", said a student leader.

Railway Board member inspects OCC of DFCCIL

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Member of the Railway Board (MoRB), Operations and Business Development (O&BD), Jaya Verma, a inspected the Operation Control Centre (OCC) of DFCCIL at the North Central Railway (NCR) headquarters.

At the NCR HQ she held a meeting with General Manager Satish Kumar and head of

departments and discussed various issues. She saw the functioning of the OCC. The GM told her that DFCCIL has set up a state-of-the-art OCC in Prayagraj which will serve as a command centre for the entire route length of 1,337 km of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor. It will control the train and monitor the system, including operations and power supply systems. The member focused on increasing

the number of stalls.

Verma interacted with officials and discussed the chances of the corridor in achieving the goals of NRP-2030. She congratulated the DFC officials for acquiring 86 per cent commissioning and getting connectivity between New Sonnagar (Bihar) from New Sonnagar (Gujarat). Addressing the meeting she appreciated the operational arrangements of NCR and especially praised the team

for Vande Bharat's timely operations. She instructed to work by making a rolling block programme in asset maintenance in view of safety. In view of customer satisfaction, she laid emphasis on working on the latest parameters with special focus on cleanliness and excellent quality catering. She took information about the works of Kumbh 2025 and instructed to complete all works in a timely manner.

DM inspects Panchkoshi Parikarama Marg

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam inspected the fourth parao (halt) of Panchkoshi Parikarama, Pancho Pandava in Shivpur area along with the concerned officials here on Saturday. He directed the officers to ensure proper cleanliness as well as lighting at the dharamshalas (encampment sites) and routes so that the devotees do not have to face any kind of trouble.

The repair/ preservation work of this Pancho Pandava is being done by the Tourism department. During the inspection, as soon as he entered inside the dharamshala, the DM saw that the tap water was spreading here and there and seeing this, the DM instructed the concerned personnel to keep a big drum there along with the mugs so that the devotees can use the water without wasting the same. He also instructed the officers to keep dustbins there.

Giving a special instruction to keep the cleanliness system



DM S Rajalingam inspecting a dharamshala on Panchkoshi Marg in Varanasi on Saturday.

proper, he directed the concerned personnel to empty the filled dustbins immediately and do regular cleaning.

The DM was informed that the medical team is working 24 hours on behalf of the Health department.

Rajalingam instructed the Nagar Nigam (Municipal Corporation) to set up tents inside the dharamshala and

install adequate lighting and fans in it.

He directed to install a mesh in front of the steps of the kund (pond) located there so that worship materials and other dirt could not be spread in the pond. He said that the dirt from the mesh should be removed timely.

He also gave instructions to install cement dustbins there.

When he inquired about the conservation work and the details of unfinished works, the DM expressed his displeasure over non-installation of electricity, water supply and signage. Nagar Swasthya Adhikari (City Health Officer) Dr NP Singh, Tourism department officer Nitin and officials of other related departments were also present.

Protest march taken out against railway action

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A protest march was taken out on Sunday by the political and social workers opposing the eviction of the Sarva Seva Sangh complex located near Rajghat with the help of police force. They also held a meeting at Shastri Ghat condemning the action. The speakers termed the action of the district and Railway administration as 'grossly unjust and against the law'. The complex was evicted a day ago amidst a strong protest and the police arrested several social and political workers.

Speaking on the occasion, President of Gandhi Nidhi, New Delhi and senior Gandhian thinker Ramchandra Rahi said that the action is contempt of court. He said that it is ridiculous to send social workers to jail for breach of peace while they were peaceful-

ly presenting their side. He demanded unconditional release of all arrested persons.

Narrating the incident, Samajwadi Jan Parishad's Aflatoun said that on Saturday morning, hundreds of police personnel and safai employees (sweepers) from the railway and district administration came to the campus without any order or notice and forcibly threw out the belongings from all the houses. "Books worth crores of rupees were thrown out in the open to get wet in the rain, many of which are the rarest of the rare. During this action, entry into the complex was completely banned and the electricity of the premises was also cut off. Even the entry of the media was also restricted. This act of administration is undemocratic and illegal," he said.

Former district Congress

president Prajanath Sharma said that the government is afraid of the thoughts of Gandhi, Vinoba and JP and is determined to destroy the monuments and books related to them. On the occasion, the speakers expressed anger over the incident.

They said they will register a strong protest against such an incident on July 25 when a large number of political and social workers will gather at Shastri Ghat. Father Anand, Ranju Singh, Jagannath Kushwaha, Vallabhacharya Pandey, Gagan Prakash, Manish, Radha Behan etc also presented their views.

The meeting was presided over by Dr Niti Bhai while it was conducted by Dhananjay. The vote of thanks was proposed by Sanjeev Singh. After the meeting, the people present took out a protest march and reached Ambedkar Park, where

a memorandum addressed to the President was read out, in which it was demanded that taking cognizance of the matter, the President should immediately intervene and curb the activities of the concerned departments to destroy this institution of national importance.

Due to non-availability of any competent officer from the district level to receive the memorandum, the memorandum was sent to Rashtrapati Bhavan by post.

Jagriti Rahi, Anoop Shramik, Indu Pandey, Suresh Rathore, Manish Sharma, Ravi Shekhar, Ekta Singh, Mahendra Rathor, Ashok Bharat, Dr Anand Prakash Tiwari, Prof Vijay, Ajay Pal, Om Prakash Aruna, Dr Mohammad Arif, Ranjit Kumar, Santosh Kumar, Vinod Jaiswal and many others also participated in the protest meeting.

3,181 CCTVs to be installed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

With a view to maintaining strict vigil on streets of cities coming under Prayagraj zone - Pratapgarh, Kaushambi, Hamirpur, Mahoba, Banda, Chitrakoot and Fatehpur - the police are planning to install at least 3,181 CCTVs in 1,466 static spots of these districts.

For that the district police concerned have taken up an extensive exercise to connect with business community, authorities of educational institutes, owners of prominent establishment and appealing them to install a network of

CCTV sets to enhance safety and security.

Additional DG (Prayagraj zone) Bhanu Bhaskar told mediapersons that cops are coordinating with traders, business centres and authorities of prominent establishments and encouraging them to set up a network of CCTVs on their premises that will help cops keep an eye on lawbreakers in case of any incident or mishap.

He added that all these measures are being initiated under "Operation Drishti" and cops are seeking active participation from the masses. ADG added as majority of business establishments and other

prominent buildings already have CCTV installations, cops could maximise its utility in an organised way.

As per records, Kaushambi has a total of 562 CCTVs at 181 spots and 35 more would be installed at 16 other spots. Similarly, Fatehpur has 852 CCTVs at 491 spots and 50 more cameras would be installed at 37 places. Pratapgarh will have 1,109 CCTV cameras at 521 spots. Prayagraj range comprising three districts - Kaushambi, Pratapgarh and Fatehpur - will have 2,608 cameras at 1,246 static spots.

Likewise, four districts of

Chitrakootdham range comprising Mahoba, Chitrakoot, Hamirpur and Banda will have a total 573 cameras at 220 static spots. The installation of these cameras will not just ensure better traffic management but also come in handy for effective crime control.

A senior cop said under Operation Drishti cops aim to ensure maximum utilisation of installed CCTV sets which will not only help police crackdown crime incidents but also ensure a secure feeling among residents. If an incident takes place, the CCTV footage will help cops to ascertain the identities of law breakers.

11 cattle killed in mishap

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

As many 11 head of cattle died while five were seriously injured after a large DCM truck carrying them lost control and collided with an electric pole near Mirzapur Highway in front of Pachdevra under Karchana police station on Sunday. The driver and cleaner of the DCM truck escaped after the accident.

On Sunday the DCM truck lost control and collided with the electric pole. After the

accident, the driver and cleaner of the DCM truck escaped from the spot. The passersby informed the police and they reached the spot, called two JCB machines and the DCM truck that had fallen into the ravine out was pulled out. After that the cows were taken out. It was found that 11 cows had died and five were seriously injured.

Karchana inspector Narendra Prasad called the veterinarian and got the injured treated and got the process of conducting the post-mortem of

the dead cows started. He said DCM truck has a Hamirpur number. In the investigation, it has been revealed that DCM was going towards West Bengal by loading the cows from Hamirpur.

The driver and cleaner have escaped. On the basis of the number and papers of the vehicle, action will be taken against them by lodging an FIR under Animal Cruelty Act and other sections.

NCR GM INSPECTS BRCR EXPANSION WORK: General Manager of

North Central Railway (NCR) Satish Kumar conducted a site inspection of the ongoing expansion work of Niranjan bridge.

He said the Niranjan underpass should be opened before the scheduled time of August 15 for the movement of common people.

During the inspection, the GM instructed to pay special attention to quality of work and also asked to beautify the areas near Niranjan bridge. He said the work should be done within the stipulated time limit.

Thana Samadhan Diwas organised

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

As many as 41 out of 265 cases were disposed of on the spot on Thana Samadhan Diwas organised at all 18 police stations in the district on Saturday. District Magistrate Divya Mittal (DM) and Superintendent of Police (SP) Santosh Kumar Mishra heard the problems of the aggrieved at Padari police station and four cases out of 14 were disposed of on the spot. At Kotwali City police station where ADM (Finance and Revenue) Shiv Pratap Shukla was present no case was received. At Halia police station sub-divisional magistrate SDM (Lalganj) Bharat Lal Saroj heard the problems of the people. Seven cases out of 21 were disposed of. On the day the SDM was accompanied by station house

officer (SHO) Vishnu Prabha Singh, chakbandi lekhpal Rahul and others. At Chilh police station Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Srikant Prajapati heard the problem of an aggrieved and the case was handed over to the team with directions to dispose of it without inordinate delay. At Jigna police station CO Lalganj Manjari Rao heard the problems of aggrieved persons and disposed of three cases out of 33. For the remaining matters the teams were formed for disposing them of on merit. At Adalhaat police station tehsildar Chunar Shakti Prakash Singh and at Rajgarh police station tehsildar Madihan SK Yadav heard the problems of complainants.

COUPLES REUNITE: Five couples reunited under Project Milan programme on

Sunday. At Police Lines a family counselling centre is working in which the cases of family disputes are being settled through counselling. At the centre the counsellors hold meetings of couples who are living separately due to misunderstandings.

The counsellors succeeded in convincing five couples to live together and extended best wishes for their bright future. The entire process was conducted in the presence of the incharge of the centre sub-inspector Shashi Tiwari, constable Sapna, counsellors Parwati Pandey, Dr Krishna Singh, Krishna Kumar Srivastava and others.

INSTALLATION CEREMONY: The installation ceremony of Rotary Club Mirzapur Gaurav was held on Saturday.

MLC Shyam Narain Singh 'Vineet Singh', who was the chief guest, said lighting of lamp is not merely a formality to start any good work. He said that we can serve the humanity only by emulating the spirit of the lamp.

He exhorted the club members to serve the needy with a magnanimous spirit and show the path to the next generation. The chief guest was welcomed by the new president of club Raj Bahadur Singh and the vote of thanks was proposed by past president Ravi Katore.

The programme was conducted by Raman Pahwa. Harsh Srivastava and Gauri Agrawal were the guests of honour. Sandeep Jain, Ravi Kalyani, Ashutosh Soni, Akhilesh Singh, Ashish Mehrotra and others were present.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Delicate situation

India bans rice export to stabilise prices but it can have ramifications in vulnerable countries

India has done what the world feared the most, banning non-basmati rice export. India exports rice to 140 countries, most of them in Africa and Southeast Asia, and accounts for 40 per cent of the total world export. Global agriculture has always been susceptible to various challenges and crises. The Russia-Ukraine war which accounted for a quarter of the world's wheat supply has already put the world's food security under severe strain. After Russia's defence ministry statement that ships leaving a Ukrainian port will be legitimate military target, the Black Sea initiative is virtually over. Vladimir Putin has hinted he is willing to consider the deal again if his demands are met. But the bombing of Odesa port suggests that what he said was to the audience in the global south. The Black Sea grain initiative was negotiated in July 2022 between Turkey, the UN and Russia as a way of ensuring that Ukraine's grain could leave its southern ports via the Bosphorus. But after the deal is over, the shipping crossing the sea routes is at high risk and that disrupts the world food supply line. Indian decision comes in the aftermath of this breakdown. But unfortunately, it is further going to compound the problem as now not only wheat but rice would be off the shelf for most countries. In response to this crisis and to safeguard its domestic interests, India took the significant step of banning the export of non-basmati rice.



This decision has sparked intense debate and raised questions about its implications for both India and the international community. India is a significant player in the global agricultural arena, contributing substantially to the production of rice and wheat. The country has historically been a major exporter of non-basmati rice, which serves as a staple for many nations, especially in Africa and Southeast Asia. With the Black Sea Wheat Crisis intensifying, India faced a challenging dilemma: balancing its commitment to support global food security while safeguarding its domestic requirements. By imposing the ban, India sought to ensure a sufficient buffer of rice stocks to meet its domestic demand, alleviating concerns of possible food shortages and price volatility within the country. India's decision, though understandable from a national perspective, has raised concerns among importing nations. The ban could exacerbate food crises in vulnerable regions. As a responsible member of the international community, India must explore avenues to address the needs of other nations. This is more relevant as India is president of two important organisations – G20 and SCO, which we are celebrating with much fanfare. Instead of a blanket ban on exporting non-basmati rice, India could have availed the option of capping the exports and banning basmati rice which is more in demand in the US and Europe, thus providing cheaper varieties to the people in Africa and other developing countries. India must explore alternative strategies to mitigate the impact on food-importing nations.

The country has historically been a major exporter of non-basmati rice, which serves as a staple for many nations, especially in Africa and Southeast Asia. With the Black Sea Wheat Crisis intensifying, India faced a challenging dilemma: balancing its commitment to support global food security while safeguarding its domestic requirements. By imposing the ban, India sought to ensure a sufficient buffer of rice stocks to meet its domestic demand, alleviating concerns of possible food shortages and price volatility within the country. India's decision, though understandable from a national perspective, has raised concerns among importing nations. The ban could exacerbate food crises in vulnerable regions. As a responsible member of the international community, India must explore avenues to address the needs of other nations. This is more relevant as India is president of two important organisations – G20 and SCO, which we are celebrating with much fanfare. Instead of a blanket ban on exporting non-basmati rice, India could have availed the option of capping the exports and banning basmati rice which is more in demand in the US and Europe, thus providing cheaper varieties to the people in Africa and other developing countries. India must explore alternative strategies to mitigate the impact on food-importing nations.

PICTALK



Devotees carry pots filled with holy water of the Ganga river to offer it to Lord Shiva, in Prayagraj

India needs protocols not privileges



BHOPIINDER SINGH

A nation that was born out of Gandhian struggle is now in the throes of its own perpetuated class of nouveau-colonists

Chief Justice DY Chandrachud's acute and welcome observation on the fine difference between 'protocol' and 'privilege' is significant in its import, beyond the recent questioning of a fellow judge's haughtiness. The curse of Laal-Neeli Bathi (Red/Blue Light) culture as a metaphor amongst the governing class, be it politicians, judiciary, babus (bureaucrats) or those in 'Uniforms', is a lamentable phenomenon of presumed entitlement. This slippery slope has led to the prefixation of many V's before the denomination of vips. Partly rooted in the colonial hangover of the superior governing class, part in feudal mindset, and partly even in the inherent thrill of a misplaced sense of achievement in the have versus have-nots power equation, the malaise persists.

The Judge in question had imperiously sought an 'explanation' on a matter that the Chief Justice clarified that the High Court, "does not possess disciplinary jurisdiction". While the Judge may have been empowered to question the ostensible 'protocol' lacunae, the spirit of measure and restraint was completely missing when he insisted on the Court Registrar seeking an explanation owing to, "great inconvenience and displeasure of His Lordship". Just to keep things in context, the missing 'protocol' was in terms of refreshments!

Chief Justice Chandrachud's wise counsel that, "Protocol 'facilities' which are made available to judges should not be utilized to assert a claim to privilege which sets them apart from society or as a manifestation of power or authority. A wise exercise of judicial authority, both on and off the bench, is what sustains the credibility and legitimacy of the judiciary and the confidence which society has in its judges", would have resonated with the citizenry at having their own experiences with such hubris. Beyond the legalese of 'protocol', no reasonable individual can remain oblivious to the harsh realities and tribulation of an average Indian who coexist with the VIPs with many more denials of rights and privileges, to their existence.



What a citizen frowns upon is not so much on 'protocol' itself (if followed with due sobriety) but more so on the clear excesses (which can be well beyond the mandated levels of 'protocol') and its extrapolated interpretations. While certainly not a case of judicial restraint or activism – it was perhaps one of simple overreach.

The security cover is yet another realm of VIP vanity in India. Beyond the genuine security threat assessments that ought to define the categorization of security afforded to a VIP i.e., Z+, Z, Y+, Y or X, it is often a matter of 'privilege' and status symbolism that is not necessarily based on threat perception, only. Sensing its significance, the denial or the affording of security cover to an individual can also be a political/partisan move, to ostensibly reward or diminish an individual's stature in the public eye. In doing so, the dispensation can be seen to be encouraging the misuse of what ought to be a functional imperative, stripped of any other considerations. It is not uncommon to see politicians 'reward' or 'punish' the universe beyond officialese e.g., businessmen, godmen, film stars etc., who either toe or oppose the party line.

In more mature democra-

cies, sticking to rules as opposed to demanding privileges is the norm – the people simply wouldn't tolerate those in power (governmental or non-governmental), who flaunt the same. A well-functioning society insists on parity and equity of rule application and not on privileges or leniencies. Law enforcement does not take too well name-dropping, arguments or bending the rules towards any authority of power, as they slam the rulebook at anyone caught doing a misdemeanour. On the contrary, there is increasing pressure from the citizenry on the people in power to demonstrate compliance, humility and sensitivity, even if they were to be officially afforded any special 'protocol'. This is not to suggest that there are no cases of corruption or 'fixing' in such democracies, but at least the civic and law-and-order imperatives for the common citizenry are by and large, efficient and equitable, comparatively. In India, inequities and privileges are all pervasive and especially hard for the average Indian on the street who has come to 'normalise' their inferior existence in comparison to the superior existence, of the entitled.

For a nation that was born out of Gandhian struggle for non-discrimination, dignity and equality for all, without any fear or favour, is now in the throes of its own perpetuated class of nouveau-colonists. The simplicity, austerity and inclusivity that was the hallmark of our founding fathers is an ironical loss, with many routinely mouthing condescending platitudes of simplicity, whilst still ensuring that the traps of pomp and show (that could even shame the erstwhile colonisers) are never surrendered. It comes alive in the types of designations posted boldly on vehicles, the size and placement of rank stars, the glitz of beacons, the shrill of hooters and the size of a cavalcade to announce the 'arrival' of an individual to an event. The timely reminder by the Chief Justice on, "self-reflection and introspection", really cuts across the landscape of the entitled. Sadly, it is the citizenry that readily justifies, contextualises or resorts to convenient whataboutery whenever an excess of privilege is pointed out, unlike in the other mature democracies are in a persistent 'questioning' mode, as that is the only way forward, towards positive governance.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

REVIVAL OF COALITION POLITICS

Sir — Recently, the era of coalition governments in Indian politics has been revived and redefined, just 10 months before the upcoming 2024 general election. The NDA, which was considered defunct for the past four years, was suddenly revitalized by the BJP, even as 26 opposition parties formed the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) to challenge the NDA.

The BJP has projected an image of strength and popularity, asserting that it no longer needs allies. Having secured a simple majority on its own in 2014 and further consolidating its position in 2019, the BJP seemed to have forgotten about the importance of alliances. It has a history of disregarding and abandoning allies once they have served their purpose.

However, the unexpected revival of the NDA suggests that the BJP may have felt the need to regain credibility and public trust. Internal surveys may have shown a decline in goodwill and confidence in the party's governance.

The stage is now set for a fierce political battle between the NDA and INDIA in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, potentially bringing significant changes to the country's political landscape.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

100TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF MUKESH

Sir — Mukesh Chandra Mathur: The Timeless Voice of Hindi Music. Fondly known as Mukesh, he was an icon of the Indian music industry, whose soulful voice and emotive renditions continue to resonate with generations. Mukesh's entry into the world of playback singing came in the late 1940s when he moved to Mumbai, the heart of the Indian film industry.

He initially faced struggles and rejections, but his determination and perseverance paid off when music director Naushad recognised his talent and offered him the opportunity to sing for the film "Andaz" (1949). This marked the beginning of a remarkable

Census further delayed



The Indian Census, originally scheduled for 2021, has been further delayed and is now set to begin in 2024 along with the parliament elections. This delay is expected to adversely impact many welfare schemes and socio-economic development initiatives that rely on updated population data. The Bihar government's plans for a caste-based census have also faced legal complications. Reliable data is crucial for effective policy formation, and the quality of statistical surveys depends heavily on census data. The delay in conducting the census has raised concerns about the accuracy of population estimates and resource allocation for government schemes.

Welfare schemes like the targeted Public Distribution System under the National Food Security Act depend on accurate population estimates, and relying on outdated data may result in some deserving beneficiaries being deprived of benefits. The delay also impacts debates on electoral boundaries and seat apportionment across states. The consequences of delaying the census extend to policy formulation, monitoring of government schemes, and statistical management for governance. The need for a timely census has been emphasized.

The delay in the Indian Census, now scheduled for 2024, poses significant challenges for policy and governance. The reliance on outdated data could lead to inaccurate resource allocation and hinder the effective implementation of welfare schemes. The government is urged to prioritize the census to ensure reliable data for evidence-based policymaking and planning.

Yashpal Raihan | Jalandhar

journey that would earn him an everlasting place in the hearts of millions of music lovers.

The 1950s and 1960s are often referred to as the "Golden Era" of Hindi cinema and music, and it was during this period that Mukesh's career reached its zenith. His distinct voice, characterized by its deep emotional resonance, struck a chord with listeners.

He had a rare ability to convey the deepest emotions through his soul-stirring melodies, making him the ideal choice for playback singing for actors like Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar, and Manoj Kumar.

One of the most celebrated partnerships in the Indian film industry was that of Mukesh with the legendary actor and filmmaker Raj Kapoor.

The duo created magic together, contributing to some of the most iconic films and songs in Bollywood history, Songs like "Awara Hoon" from "Awara" (1951) and "Mera Joota Hai Japni" from "Shree 420" (1955) became anthems

of the era, firmly establishing Mukesh's legacy. As we celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of Mukesh Chandra Mathur, his presence may no longer grace the mortal world, but his timeless voice lives on forever.

Amarjeet kumar | Hazaribag

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

Sir — I have a few suggestions for your esteemed newspaper:
i) Print on the top middle of the front page your establishment date and number of years in public service.
ii) separate page for daily letters from readers on local issues
iii) prize for the best letter of the day/week
iv) a separate page to carry letters from students, along with their photos
v) start regional languages editions
vi) accommodate more letters

P Vasudeva Rao Sreelekh | Secunderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Indian economy surges ahead despite challenges



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

The resilience and vibrancy shown by Indian economy gives hope and optimism for the global economy which is going through tough times

Financial markets have been extremely volatile for quite some time across the globe. While, in many countries, strident and non-congruent policy responses of the central banks to unprecedentedly high inflation have caused volatility in the market, in a country like China, it is the real estate sector that continues to create vulnerability, and in Europe, it is the energy crisis that is contributing to fragilities in financial outlook. Similarly, in emerging economies, the ongoing spillovers from the Russia-Ukraine conflicts, rising interest rates spurred by inflation, supply-side crisis, weak fundamentals and large capital outflows which are pushing up the borrowing costs, have made things worse for them. In such a grim financial situation, the first meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors under India's G20 Presidency becomes much sought after by the entire world.



India's presidency designed the meeting in such a way, that a meaningful exchange of ideas among finance ministers and governors of the central banks could happen. It is also encouraging that some pragmatic and meaningful approaches were seen to be addressing some of the key global issues. Covering issues such as strengthening multilateral development banks to address shared global challenges of the 21st century, financing for resilient, inclusive and sustainable cities of tomorrow, and leveraging Digital Public Infrastructure for advancing financial inclusion and productivity gains, augur well for the global economy, which appears to be in a dire state.

It is also good to see that the meeting touched upon matters related to global health, international taxation and a few other vexing issues as well, as these discussions intend to provide a clear mandate for the various work-streams of the G20 Finance Track, which will further pursue the process. Moreover, discussions over subjects like digital public infrastructure, policy perspectives on crypto assets and the role of National Payment Systems in cross-border payments, also promise a lot with some common, affordable and scalable solutions to some of the daunting challenges being faced by G20 member countries.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi rightly underlined the challenges faced by the world and urged the financial leaders, who represent the global economy in one of the most difficult times, to come out with humane and inclusive solutions. It is sad that the global economy, which is already crippled by the Covid pandemic, again fell prey to rising geo-political tensions, supply chain crisis, sky-high inflation, food and energy

crisis, unsustainable debt levels and the multilateral financial organizations not being resilient to reform themselves. It is now up to the custodians of the leading economies and monetary systems of the world to bring back stability, confidence and growth to the global economy.

Amid these global economic upheavals, the Indian economy has shown much vibrancy, and also optimism for the global economy. Even IMF has just said that the Indian economy will contribute 15% to the overall growth of the world economy. Here, constant progress on Sustainable Development Goals is also very much needed to withstand future challenges. Moreover, exploring and harnessing the power of technology without letting it be misused and abused, also becomes important, as is the technology that is the greatest leveller and empowering element when it comes to governance, financial inclusion and ease of living.

(The writer is a senior journalist)



FIRST COLUMN OVERCOMING STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

Calm down with meditation, breath control and silence; wonders await



RAVI VALLURI

Are we running after a chimaera? Or like Rama and Lakshman are we running after a nonexistent golden deer? In all situations, our mind is fully aware that what we are attempting is incorrect and inchoate, yet we undertake that activity and become stressed.

We are not focused or centred and are plagued by demonic thoughts which trigger stress. On average we are cannonaded by fifty thousand thoughts a day which hurts the mind.

The company we keep and the food we partake in also have a significant impact on the human mind and body. Consumption of Tamasik and Rajasik food, as per Ayurveda leads to sluggishness or overactivity. These in turn trigger restlessness and/or stress in the body and mind.

Improper time management leads to stressful situations. How does one combat this?

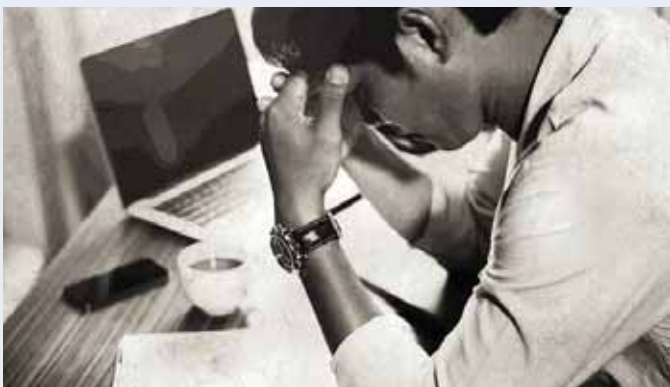
a) POSEC METHOD – That is to prioritize activities by economizing activities.

b) By a SWOT analysis to prioritize work.

c) Learn to work in groups and the art of delegation.

d) With dexterity we should learn the technique to say 'yes' or 'no'. It is an oxymoron kind of situation. However, this is the most efficacious method for time management.

We can celebrate only if we can silence our minds and follow the right techniques. For instance, we can go for long walks, talk out our problems, write down all our botherations, be in sync with our breath and movement, pursue a passion, get out of our comfort zone or even exercise vigorously so that positive endorphins get released which have a soothing effect on the mind and body. Despite practising all these techniques, we may not be able to find our place in the sun and remain stressed out. So, what does one do in such a situation?



Just surrender to the immense power within ourselves and learn the power of acceptance. We should just realize the potency of Aham Brahmasmi- 'I am the infinite reality', as per Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. The mind is so powerful that it needs to be harnessed. We just need to declutter our minds.

"Your mind is an instrument. It is there to be used for a specific task, and when the task is completed, you lay it down. As it is, I would say about 80% to 90% of most people's thinking is not only repetitive and useless, but because of its dysfunctional and often negative nature, much of it is harmful. Observe your mind and you find this is to be true. It causes a serious leakage of vital energy," writes Eckhart Tolle.

Incidentally, Tolle was about to snuff out his life at the age of 29, but today he is an eminent philosopher. There are several ways to channel this energy. There may be some who may practice meditation, breathing techniques and observe silence. There may be others who remain focused by playing a game of tennis and sweating it out or pursuing other passions. One must choose the path that suits one's personality. But the aim remains to be in the present and lead a happy life to avoid stressful situations.

We need to remain grateful and feel the blessings and abundance in our lives. Let the mind not be judgmental and complain and cling to negativities. Only then humans can eliminate stress from the system. As Alice Walker said, "Look closely at the present you are constructing; it should look like the future you are dreaming."

(The writer is a spiritual teacher at Art of Living)

Nutrition can ensure wholesome well-being

A strategic, integrated approach to promote nutritional content, delivery and outreach that nurture health, wellness and immunity is what we need now



DINESH SOOD



Nutrition and health are an essential part of modern life. However, holistic nutrition is India's flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes, especially for malnourished children, women and the elderly. In the first category, the economically disadvantaged population is more vulnerable to malnutrition. Maintaining a healthy balance to prevent malnutrition has become more challenging for the underprivileged.

The second category is well-to-do people who have excesses or imbalances in intake of nutrients that have been rampant across all age groups in India. Due to a lack of knowledge, excess or unbalanced nutrition leads to metabolic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and heart diseases. The double burden of malnutrition has turned India's attention to nutritional development as a national priority. Personalized, targeted or stratified nutrition for healthcare and well-being is the need of the hour.

In recent years, India has started to gain self-sufficiency in crop production and growing steadily. Despite progress, malnutrition in the country has not diminished. The 2020 National Family Health Survey shows that child malnutrition is on the rise and the situation is alarming. According to the National Comprehensive Nutrition Survey conducted by UNICEF in 2019, nearly 50% of children under the age group of five were short in height.

According to the fifth National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2019-21, health and nutrition have not improved significantly in India, the world's most populous country. Available data show that 7.7% of children were severely underweight, 19.3% were wasted and 35.5% were stunted. Meanwhile, 3.4% of children were overweight. Anaemia among children under-5 has become significantly worse with the current prevalence as 67.1% compared to 58.6% according to the NFHS-4th series and



IT IS ESSENTIAL TO ESTABLISH THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE REALIZATION OF THE CONCEPT OF PERSONAL NUTRITION. WE NEED QUALITY HEALTH AND NUTRITION SERVICES, SKILLED FRONTLINE WORKERS, AND THE ABILITY TO DELIVER

(The writer is co-founder and MD, of Orane International, a training partner with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). Views expressed are personal)

57% of women of reproductive age are anaemic in the country.

Dietetics and nutrition have attracted attention, especially in India in recent years. Due to the rise of lifestyle-related diseases, there is a growing awareness of the importance of proper nutrition and health. To stay away from these diseases, healthy eating habits have become the norm. This has resulted in a surge in demand for the services of nutritionists and dietitians.

Acute Shortage of Professionals:

Nutrition-conscious Indians don't have enough nutritionists to consult for a healthy diet. A comprehensive study on the shortage of nutritionists and dietitians conducted by the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) and submitted to the Union health ministry says that there is a shortage of nearly 5.5 lakh professional nutritionists in India. The International Federation of Dietetic Societies says there is one dietitian for every

2 lakh people in India. This is comparable to 35 to 40 nutritionists per one lakh people in Denmark and Israel, and 66 per one lakh people in Japan.

Dietitians and nutritionists play an important role in promoting health and preventing malnutrition or lifestyle-related diseases. Nutritionists apply nutrition and health systems to individuals, communities and organizations to change the pattern of food, lifestyle and behaviour to meet needs for well-being.

Social media and cross-border, digital or e-commerce are developing some of their strengths as they impact the next generation of consumers. But the personalized

nutrition can help prolong health and reduce the healthcare costs associated with ageing. The National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) has published nutritional guidelines, but few people know what their recommendations are. Experts say that nutritionists did not receive enough attention until a decade ago, but now their presence is crucial.

Opportunities in the Service Industry:

In addition to India's government programs and campaigns such as "Poshan" to reduce malnutrition among the poor, the world is making the personalised nutrition service industry worth an estimated \$15 billion by 2023 and is expected to reach \$37.3 billion by 2030. India's share should be at least 4 per cent about \$1.48 billion or Rs 12,150 crore.

Career Scope:

The future of dietitians and nutritionists in India is changing with many careers in dietetics and nutrition in the public and private sectors. India has the largest workforce in the 18-24 age group requiring a range of skills such as proven expertise, knowledge of food and food products to deal with chronic diseases.

A qualified, experienced and certified crew of nutritionists is needed to nurture nutrition as holistic at hospitals, dispensaries and gyms, personalised or corporate wellness. In the private sector as clinical nutritionist who works in health clinics, wellness centres, and food and nutrition-related industries are booming. In the public sector, general well-being nutritionists and dietitians can work in government hospitals, health departments, and

research institutes. Sports nutritionist manages explicit sustenance necessities and rules of sports players, which are needed for sports preparation, exercise centres and wellness centres.

As a nutritionist serving the wider community, there are some obvious reasons to serve, and there are also some key reasons why the area is gaining so much attention. To develop the necessary financial, social and technical tools to manage the dietary and nutrition problems facing the country.

Conclusion:

The government is trying to create more programs to educate people about the importance of health. Judging by all the ideas provided by the government, the field of nutrition does not seem far from being one of the most important fields in India. It is essential to establish the legal framework for the realization of the concept of personal nutrition. We need quality health and nutrition services, skilled frontline workers, and the ability to improve exercise, outreach and delivery. The lack of professional nutritionists and dietitians in government hospitals and dispensaries is disappointing and needs improvement in the quality of food for all citizens, especially children, women and the elderly.

The overall aim is to use a strategic, integrated approach to promote nutritional content, delivery, outreach and outcome, with a renewed focus on developing practices that nurture health, wellness and immunity towards various diseases and malnutrition in the country. The goal is to have a collaborative effort to improve the health and nutrition index.

Sanctity of Indian culture in the digital age

Encouraging critical engagement fosters a more informed understanding of Indian culture, preserving its integrity in the digital realm

Social media has made information dissemination easier, but it has also led to the spread of misinformation. To preserve and protect Indian culture, it is crucial to ensure accurate and reliable information on social media platforms. Fact-checking is essential to understand the consequences of spreading misinformation, the cultural significance of India, and the prevalence of fake news.

Social media has significantly impacted society by enabling global connections and exposure to diverse cultures, traditions, and heritage. However, it also requires fact-checking to prevent misinformation and misconceptions, preserving the integrity of Indian culture, traditions, and heritage.



PANDIRI HARSHA BHARGAVI

(The writer is Assistant Director on deputation with the National Gallery of Modern Art, Ministry of Culture, New Delhi)

In the digital age, fact-checking is crucial as false or misleading information spreads rapidly on social media platforms. This is especially concerning for Indian culture, traditions, and heritage, as there is a wealth of misinformation online. Fact-checking ensures the accuracy and authenticity of information, allowing individuals to make informed decisions and judgments. It helps preserve the integrity of Indian culture and prevents the perpetuation of false narratives. The rapid growth of social media has prompted the urgent need for fact-checking of Indian culture, traditions, and heritage-related information. Fact-checking helps separate fact from fiction, ensuring accurate and reliable knowledge is

transmitted to the masses, and safeguarding the integrity of our cultural heritage for generations to come.

Cultural misrepresentation on social media

Cultural misrepresentation on social media perpetuates stereotypes and distortions of perceptions. Platforms' accessibility allows for inaccurate representation of culture, traditions, and heritage, leading to skewed understanding. Fact-checking and verification are crucial to ensure accurate representation.

Misinformation and stereotypes about Indian culture perpetuate harmful biases and ignorance. Social media platforms create distorted narratives, marginalizing the community. Fact-checking and critical analysis are essential to

combat the spread of inaccurate portrayals and promote appreciation for the diverse Indian heritage.

For instance, False information and misconceptions about Indian culture and traditions, particularly in the portrayal of yoga, have led to its commercialization and dilution of its spiritual and meditative aspects. Fact-checking these misconceptions is crucial to preserve the authenticity and cultural significance of yoga practices in the digital era.

Fact-checking is essential for accurate and trustworthy information on Indian culture, traditions, and heritage on social media. Misinformation on these platforms harms India's reputation and undermines credibility. Fact-checking helps combat negative

consequences and protects the rich tapestry of Indian culture. Lack of fact-checking reinforces stereotypes and prejudices, marginalizing certain communities and reducing their identities to oversimplified caricatures. Fact-checking is crucial for debunking stereotypes and fostering accurate portrayals of diverse cultures.

Misinformation on social media platforms distorts Indian heritage, perpetuating stereotypes and misconceptions. The lack of fact-checking and verification mechanisms threatens the preservation and promotion of Indian culture.

Prioritizing fact-checking is crucial for accurate representation, debunking myths, correcting misconceptions, and combating cul-

tural appropriation. **Checking Indian culture** Fact-checking of Indian culture on social media platforms faces challenges due to the vast volume of information generated and shared, as well as the complexity of the Indian cultural landscape. Understanding different traditions, rituals, and practices is crucial to avoid misinterpretation or misrepresentation. The rapid spread of misinformation on social media, driven by anonymity and content sharing, further exacerbates these challenges.

Indian culture is a remarkable melting pot of ethnicities, languages, religions, and traditions, resulting in a rich tapestry of customs and beliefs. It encompasses various artistic expressions, festivals like

Diwali, Holi, and Navratri, as well as diverse cuisines, clothing styles, and architectural marvels. The kaleidoscope of Indian culture demonstrates its complexity and beauty.

Lack of reliable sources

Fact-checking Indian culture, traditions, and heritage information on social media is crucial due to the lack of reliable sources and expertise. Distinguishing accurate and misleading content is essential to prevent misinformation and distorted understanding.

Social media platforms often contain self-proclaimed experts, complicating the matter. By verifying information from credible sources, individuals can preserve and promote accurate knowledge about Indian culture, traditions, and heritage.

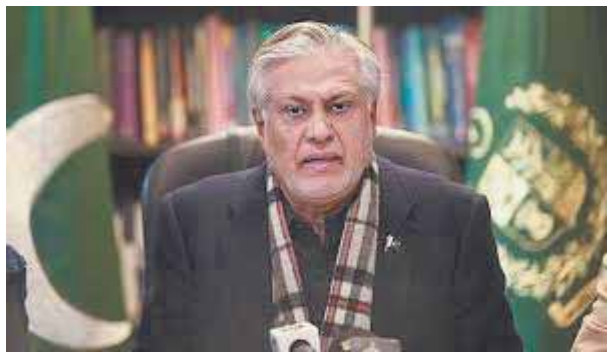
Dar likely to be pitched for interim PM

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party is considering proposing the name of Finance Minister Ishaq Dar for taking up the position of caretaker prime minister, a media report said on Sunday. Dar's name came into focus as the Shehbaz Sharif-led government mulled changes in the Elections Act 2017 to empower the upcoming caretaker set-up to take decisions beyond its constitutional mandate, with a view to ensure continuity of the recently rolled out economic plan and expedite the process aimed at receiving foreign investment in state-owned entities, reported The Express Tribune.

The Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML-N) was considering proposing the name of Dar for the caretaker prime minister as part of a broader plan to ensure the implementation of the economic policies, sources were quoted as saying by the Express Tribune newspaper.

However, the final decision about the candidature of Dar will be taken next week in con-



sultation with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) — one of the two main coalition partners.

The PML-N sources said that the government was considering amending Section 230 of the Elections Act 2017, empowering the caretaker set-up to take economic decisions and the amendments might be introduced in the National Assembly next week to allow the caretaker government to take decisions necessary to revive the economy.

Pakistan's economy is passing through a phase where the matters cannot be left for three months on just day-to-day decision-making, a senior cab-

inet member said on the condition of anonymity.

He added in order to ensure that the IMF programme remains on track and the country completes the second review in November, there was a need that the caretaker government should have more powers to take decisions in economic matters.

According to Section 230, a caretaker (interim) government shall only perform its functions to attend to day-to-day matters which are necessary to run the affairs of the government.

It will assist the Election Commission of Pakistan in holding the general elections in

accordance with law and restrict itself to activities that are of routine, non-controversial and urgent nature, in the public interest and can be reversed by a future elected government.

The present law also bars the caretaker government from taking major policy decisions, except on urgent matters.

It cannot enter into a major contract or undertaking if it is detrimental to the public interest, and it also cannot enter into major international negotiation with any foreign country or international agency; or sign or ratify any international binding instrument, except in an exceptional case.

The sources said that the proposal was to amend both the subsections of Section 230 that deal with the authority bestowed upon the interim set-up. Neithar Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar nor Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb responded to the requests for comments on the proposed amendments to the elections act. In July 2018, the then-caretaker government wanted

to enter into programme negotiations with the IMF, but the then-law minister opposed it on the grounds that the interim set-up did not have such powers. The sources said that the implementation of all the measures would require the continuation of the current economic team.

They said that because of this reason, the PML-N top leadership wanted Finance Minister Dar to be appointed as the caretaker prime minister. In that case, Tariq Bajwa, special assistant to the PM on Finance, may continue working in his present position. However, the Pakistan Peoples Party's endorsement was needed for this arrangement. There might also be objections to the political affiliation of Ishaq Dar.

If Dar is made the interim PM, he might not return in the next government as finance minister provided the current political dispensation makes a comeback. The name of Hafeez Shaikh, former finance minister, has also been making the rounds for the position of caretaker prime minister, according to the report.

Russian strike leaves one dead, cathedral damaged

AP ■ ODESA

Russia struck the Ukrainian Black Sea city of Odesa again on Sunday, local officials said, keeping up a barrage of attacks that has damaged critical port infrastructure in southern Ukraine in the past week.

At least one person was killed and 22 others wounded in the attack in the early hours. Regional Governor Oleh Kiper said that four children were among those wounded in the blasts, which severely damaged the historic Transfiguration Cathedral, a landmark Orthodox cathedral in the city.

Russia has been launching persistent attacks on Odesa, a key hub for exporting grain, since Moscow canceled a landmark grain deal on Monday amid Kyiv's grinding efforts to retake its occupied territories. Kiper noted that six residential buildings, including apartment buildings, were destroyed by the strikes.

In one such case in downtown Odesa, some people became trapped in their apartments as a result of the damage caused by the attack, which left rubble strewn in the street and partly blocking the road, and damage to power lines.

Svitlana Molcharova, 85, was rescued by emergency service workers. But after she received first medical aid, she refused to leave her destroyed apartment.

"I will stay here," she said to the emergency service worker who advised her to leave.

"I woke up when the ceiling started to fall on me. I rushed into the corridor," said Ivan Kovalenko, 19, another resident of the building. He came to Odesa having fled the city of Mykolaiv in search of a safer place to live after his house was destroyed.

"That's how I lost my home in Mykolaiv, and here, I lost my rented apartment." In his home, the ceiling partially collapsed, the balcony came off the side of the building, and all the windows were blown out. The Transfiguration Cathedral, one of the most important and largest Orthodox Cathedrals in Odesa, was severely damaged. "The destruction is enormous, half of the cathedral is now roofless,"

said Archdeacon Andrii Palchuk, as cathedral workers brought documents and valuable items out of the severely building, the floor of which was inundated with water used by firefighters to extinguish the fire.

Palchuk said the damage was caused by a direct hit from a Russian missile that penetrated the building down to the basement and caused significant damage.

Two people who were inside at the time of the strike were wounded.

"But with God's help, we will restore it," he said, bursting into tears.

Odesa's historic centre was designated an endangered World Heritage Site by the United Nations' cultural agency, UNESCO, earlier this year, despite Russian opposition.

Russia's Defence Ministry said Sunday that Russian forces had attacked sites in Odesa, "where terrorist acts against the Russian Federation were being prepared."

The ministry said in a statement that the strikes were carried out with sea- and air-based long-range high-precision weapons, and that there are "foreign mercenaries" at the targeted sites.

Earlier Russian attacks this week crippled significant parts of export facilities in Odesa and nearby Chornomorsk and destroyed 60,000 tons of grain, according to Ukraine's Agriculture Ministry.

The attacks come days after President Vladimir Putin pulled Russia out of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, a wartime deal that enabled Ukraine's exports to reach many countries facing the threat of hunger.

Putin vowed to retaliate against Kyiv for an attack Monday on the crucial Kerch Bridge linking Russia with the Crimean Peninsula, which the Kremlin illegally annexed in 2014. In other developments: Russian president Vladimir Putin and Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko are set to meet on Sunday in St Petersburg, two days after Moscow warned Poland that any aggression against its neighbor and ally Belarus, would be considered an attack on Russia.

Special forces kill gunman who broke into house near Moscow

Moscow (AP): Russian security forces on Saturday killed a heavily-armed gunman who broke into a private house in the suburbs of Moscow and fired at them, reportedly threatening to march on the Kremlin.

The assailant was spotted by guards after he had broken into an unoccupied house located in an elite cottage village in the Istra region, about 45 kilometers (less than 30 miles) west of Moscow.

When two guards and a police officer entered the house, the man held them at gunpoint, but the three later managed to escape, according to Russian media.

For several hours, the authorities negotiated with the attacker who was in combat fatigues and toted a Kalashnikov rifle.

The man claimed he came from the front lines in Ukraine and was driven by God to march on the Kremlin, the seat of the government in Moscow.

He refused to surrender, fired at the special forces and was killed when they stormed the house, Russia's National Guard said. It said that the attacker had several automatic weapons and hand grenades.

Russian law maker Alexander Khinshtein identified the assailant as Vyacheslav Chernenko, a 35-year-old resident of the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk.

It wasn't immediately clear if he indeed fought in Ukraine as he claimed.

Istra administrator Tatiana Vitushcheva described the attacker as mentally unstable.

Some Russian media claimed that the cottage he broke into once belonged to Viktor Yanukovich, the former Moscow-friendly president of Ukraine who was driven from office by mass protests and offered shelter by Russia.

It has been put up for sale by its current owner, who was abroad when the incident happened.

Yuan calls on Nepal President Paudel

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal and China have remained good neighbours since ancient times, President Ramchandra Paudel told a Chinese leader during their meeting here on Sunday. Yuan Jiajun, a politburo member of the Communist Party of China (CPC), arrived here on Sunday on a three-day visit to Nepal, leading a 26-member delegation.

Yuan called on Paudel at the Office of the President, Sheetal Niwas, and they discussed bilateral relations and mutual interests, the president's office said in a statement.

"Nepal and China have remained good neighbours since ancient times," Paudel said, and expressed confidence that "such kinds of high-level visits will further enhance multifaceted bilateral relations," it said. Yuan is expected to hold separate meetings with acting

Prime Minister and Defence Minister Purna Bahadur Khadka and Deputy Prime Minister and acting Chairman of the CPN (Maoist Centre) Narayan Kaji Shrestha at Singha Durbar on Sunday.

He is also expected to meet senior leaders of other political parties here during his visit.

Yuan arrived in Kathmandu after completing his visit to Sri Lanka where he met several leaders of the island nation, including former president Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Ahead of his visit, a CPC delegation arrived in Kathmandu on Thursday via a Sri Lankan Air flight in order to lay the ground for Yuan's visit, the Kathmandu Post newspaper reported.

Yuan is visiting Nepal at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a CPN-UML leader said, adding that Yuan is considered to be the future leader of the CPC, it said

Meloni opens conference to curb migrants flow to Europe

AP ■ ROME

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni on Sunday called for new, more equal relationships between Europe and migrants' countries of origin and transit as she convened a summit of some 20 nations, EU officials and international organisations aimed at stanching flows of illegal migration.

The one-day conference is a Meloni initiative that aims to make Italy a leader in resolving issues impacting Mediterranean nations. Chief among them is migration, as Italy sustains hundreds of new arrivals daily on Europe's southern border, but also energy as Europe looks to Africa and the Middle East to permanently replace Russian supplies. Human rights groups see the meeting, which includes nations from both northern and sub-Saharan Africa as well as the Middle East, as creating a future roadmap, and worry it



Participants into an International conference on migration pose for a family photo in Rome on Sunday

will amount to anti-migrant policies that put the onus on Africa to keep Africans out of Europe. Meloni told the opening meeting that Western arrogance had likely stood in the way of solutions to the migrant issue. She proposed four main prongs for future cooperation: fighting criminal organizations trafficking migrants, better

managing flows of migrants, supporting refugees and helping countries of origin.

"The West too often has given the impression of being more interested in giving lessons rather than lending a hand," Meloni said. "It is probably this diffidence that has made it difficult to make progress on solutions."

Floods in China kill five, over 1500 evacuated

Beijing (AP): Floods caused by heavy rain hit eastern China, leaving at least five dead and three missing while over 1,500 people were evacuated, state media reported on Sunday. China National Radio said the massive floods swept through a village in the Fuyang district of the city of Hangzhou, engulfing many houses on Saturday afternoon. The rain later led to a partial mountain collapse and mudslide, affecting multiple areas in the district and more than 1,600 households suffered power outage, CCTV said. Over 1,500 people were evacuated, the state news agency Xinhua reported.

Every year, seasonal flooding hits large parts of China, particularly in the semitropical south. However, some northern regions this year have reported the worst floods in 50 years.

The torrents have hit different parts of the country this month and caused casualties. Earlier this month, at least 15 people were killed by floods in the southwestern region of Chongqing. According to CCTV on Sunday, torrential rain also turned many streets in Liaoning, a northeastern province, into rivers, forcing 5,590 people to be evacuated. About 30 houses and 54 hectares of crops were damaged, it added.

In the central province of Hubei, rainstorms trapped some residents in their vehicles and homes. By Saturday night, authorities had rescued or evacuated some 220 people in Xianning city, state media People's Daily reported. China's deadliest and most destructive floods in recent history were in 1998, when 4,150 people died, most of them along the Yangtze River. In 2021, more than 300 people died in the central province of Henan. Record rainfall inundated the provincial capital of Zhengzhou on July 20 that year, turning streets into rushing rivers and flooding at least part of a subway line.

Downpours in Canada's Atlantic coast cause flooding; four missing

Halifax (Canada): Four people are missing after intense thunderstorms dumped record amounts of rain across a wide swath of Canada's Atlantic coast province of Nova Scotia over the past two days, causing flash flooding, road washouts and power outages. The floods submerged multiple vehicles, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police spokeswoman Cindy Bayers said two such incidents in West Hants north of Halifax have left two adults and two children unaccounted for as of Saturday morning.

The two children went missing after the vehicle they were travelling in got stuck underwater, Bayers said, noting the three other occupants were able to escape safely. Two other individuals, who Bayers

described as a youth and a man, remain unaccounted for following a separate vehicle submersion. Two other people in that vehicle were rescued, she said, adding police are actively searching for all four missing people. Torrential downpours started on Friday afternoon across the Halifax region, dumping more than 200 millimeters of rain in some areas. The port city typically receives about 90-100 mm of rain during an average July. Based on radar estimates and unofficial observations, Environment Canada said on Saturday that some areas may have received more than 300 mm in 24 hours. Radar maps show the heaviest rainfall extending along the province's southwestern shore to a point north of Halifax.

Heavy rains in Af, Pak kill 31

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Heavy flooding from seasonal rains in Afghanistan killed at least 31 people and left dozens missing over the past three days, while in neighbouring Pakistan 13 people died due to heavy rains and landslides. Shafiqullah Rahimi, the ruling Taliban's appointed spokesman for Afghanistan's State Ministry for Natural Disaster Management, said Sunday that at least 31 people were killed, 74 were injured and 41 others were missing. Flash floods hit the capital, Kabul, the Maidan Wardak and Ghazni provinces. He added that the majority of the casualties were in west Kabul and Maidan Wardak.

Rahimi also said around 250 livestock perished in the floods.

The flooding brought further misery to the already suffering Afghanistan. In April, the UN's humanitarian affairs

agency said the south Asian country is facing its third consecutive year of drought, its second year of severe economic hardship and the consequences of decades of war and natural disasters. The most recent flash flood happened in the Jalrez district of Maidan Wardak province west of Kabul, killing 12 people, said Taliban government spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid.

At least 40 other people were missing and rescue teams were busy conducting search and rescue operations, he said. The provincial governor's office in a statement said that hundreds of homes were either damaged or destroyed and the missing are believed to be under the rubble of collapsed homes.

The statement also said that hundreds of square miles of agricultural land were washed out and destroyed and the highway between Kabul and the central Bamian

Sri Lanka to slap max retail price for fuel

Colombo (PTI): The Sri Lankan government would introduce from next month a maximum retail price for fuel, State Minister of Energy DV Chanka said on Sunday. Speaking to reporters, Chanka said that the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) would be set as per the pricing formula of the government. "The government would introduce a maximum retail price for fuel. Based on the pricing formula we will set a MRP," Chanka said.

The move of the Sri Lankan government comes ahead of a top Chinese energy company is set to enter the retail fuel market of the island nation of the first time in August.

Chanaka said that the three players in the fuel retail market, the state owned CPC, LIOC, the local operation of the Indian Oil Company and

Sinopec would then be operating under the MRP. "This would make the consumer benefit from competition," Chanaka said. Sinopec, the Chinese energy company, is to enter the retail fuel market for the first time in August, Chanaka said. "Their first shipment is due on August 3," he said. Sinopec has followed the LIOC to become the third player in the local fuel retailing operations with an investment of 100 million dollars for import, storage, and sale of fuel.

They are to take over 150 privately-owned fuel outlets currently managed by the Petroleum Corporation, as well as setting up 50 new fuel stations. Meanwhile, the energy ministry official said the LIOC had made a proposal for an oil distribution pipe line connecting Nagapatnam, Trincomalee and Colombo.

Displaced Af students find homes at US universities through scholarships

AP ■ DALLAS

As the Taliban swept back into power in Afghanistan, in the summer of 2021, Fahima Sultani and her fellow university students tried for days to get into the Kabul airport, only to be turned away by gun-wielding extremists. "No education, just go back home," she recalled one shouting.

Nearly two years later, Sultani, now 21, is safely in the US and working toward her bachelor's degree in data science at Arizona State University in Tempe on a scholarship. When she's not studying, she likes to hike up nearby Tempe Butte, the kind of outing she enjoyed in her mountainous homeland.

Seeing students like Sultani rush to leave in August 2021 as the US withdrew from

Afghanistan after 20 years, colleges, universities and other groups across the U.S. started piecing together the funding for hundreds of scholarships so they could continue their educations outside of their home country.

Women of Sultani's generation, born around the time the



US ousted the Taliban after the 9/11 attacks in 2001, grew up attending school and watching as women pursued careers. The Taliban's return upended those freedoms.

"Within minutes of the collapse of the government in Kabul, US universities said, 'We'll take one; We'll take three; We'll take a professor; We'll take a student,'" said Allan Goodman, CEO of the Institute of International Education, a global not-for-profit that helps fund such scholarships.

The fears leading the students to quickly board flights were soon justified as the Taliban ushered in a harsh Islamic rule: Girls cannot attend school beyond the sixth grade and women, once again required to wear burqas, have been banned from universities and are restricted from most employment. Sultani is one of more than 60 Afghan women who arrived at ASU by December 2021 after fleeing Afghanistan, where she had been studying online through Asian University for Women in Bangladesh during the pandemic.

Two Indian-origin men plead guilty to drug trafficking in US

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Two Indian-origin men have pleaded guilty to drug and firearms charges arising from a drug trafficking venture run out of a motel in the US.

Kamal Bhula, 44, of Albuquerque, and Pragneshkumar "Pete" Patel, 36, of Montgomery, Alabama are among the three charged for maintaining a drug-involved premise at a motel in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Both Bhula and Patel have pleaded guilty to one count each of maintaining a drug-involved premise, the Attorney's Office of New Mexico said in a statement on Monday.

The third accused, Jonathan Craft, 36, of Albuquerque, pleaded guilty to

Inn at 7640 Central Avenue SE and was the on-site manager from September 2017 to March 2018, when Bhula leased the property from Patel and took over as the on-site manager.

Craft lived and worked at Best Choice Inn, claiming to be in charge when Bhula was away. Craft sold drugs from his room, permitted others to do the same, and permitted individuals to use drugs on the premises. Craft also unlawfully possessed a firearm.

Bhula and Patel allowed drug trafficking at the motel and personally observed and profited from those who used controlled substances on the premises.

At sentencing, Bhula, Craft and Patel each face up to 20 years in prison, the release added.

Hun Sen set for landslide victory

AP ■ PHNOM PENH

Longtime Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen cast his ballot 10 minutes after polls opened at 7 am on Sunday, in an election in which his party is all but assured a landslide victory thanks to the effective suppression and intimidation of any real opposition that critics say has made a farce of democracy in the Southeast Asian nation.

The European Union, United States and other Western countries refused to send observers, saying the election lacked the conditions to be considered free and fair. That led international officials from Russia, China and Guinea-Bissau to watch as Hun Sen voted at a polling station in his home district outside of the capital, Phnom Penh.

He held his ballot high for all to see, before depositing it into the silver metal box and leaving the station, pausing to take selfies and shake hands with supporters outside.

The longest-serving leader in Asia, Hun Sen has steadily consolidated power with his strong-arm tactics over the

last 38 years. But, at age 70, he has suggested he will hand off the premiership during the upcoming five-year term to his oldest son, Hun Manet, perhaps as early as the first month after the elections.

Hun Manet, 45, has a bachelor's degree from the US Military Academy at West Point as well as a master's from NYU and a PhD from Bristol University in Britain. He is currently chief of Cambodia's army. Despite his Western education, however, observers don't expect any immediate shifts in policy from that of his father, who has steadily drawn Cambodia closer to China in recent years.

"I don't think anyone expects Hun Sen to sort of disappear once Hun Manet is prime minister," said Astrid Norén-Nilsson, a Cambodia expert at Sweden's Lund University. "I think they will probably be working closely together and I don't think that there is a big difference in their political outlook, including foreign policy."

Hun Manet is just part of what is expected to be a broader generational change, with



Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) drops a ballot into a box for voting at a polling station at Takhmua in Kandal province, southeast Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on Sunday. AP/PTI

the ruling Cambodian People's Party planning to install younger leaders into most ministerial positions.

"That's going to be the big change of guard, that's what I'm watching," Norén-Nilsson said. "It's all about the transition, it's all about who's going to come in and in what positions they find themselves." At the station where Hun Sen cast his ballot,

voter Nan Sy, a former lawmaker himself with a smaller royalist party, said the main issue for him was stability.

"Without stability we cannot talk about education, we cannot talk about development," the 59-year-old said without saying who he voted for. There were few reports of any protests against the elections, but Gen Khieu Sopheak,

Cambodia's national police spokesperson, said 27 people were being sought over allegations they called for voters to spoil their ballots in a Telegram chat channel. He said there had been two arrests at polling stations as well.

Hun Sen had been a middle-ranking commander in the radical communist Khmer Rouge responsible for genocide in the 1970s before defecting to Vietnam. When Vietnam ousted the Khmer Rouge from power in 1979, he quickly became a senior member of the new Cambodian government installed by Hanoi. A wily and sometimes ruthless politician, Hun Sen has maintained power as an autocrat in a nominally democratic framework.

His party's stranglehold on power faltered in 2013 elections, in which the opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party won 44% of the popular vote to CPP's 48%. Hun Sen responded to the wake-up call by going after leaders of the opposition, primarily through sympathetic courts, which eventually dissolved the party after local elections in 2017 when it again fared well.

UK political parties getting jitters over green policies

AP ■ LONDON

Environmentalists cautioned Britain's main political parties on Sunday not to water down their climate change promises after a special election result widely seen as a thumbs-down from voters to a tax on polluting cars. The governing Conservatives suffered two heavy defeats in a trio of by-elections for House of Commons seats on Thursday.

But they managed to win the third contest, for a suburban London district, by focusing on a divisive green levy imposed by London's Labour Party mayor.

The Ultra Low Emission Zone, or ULEZ, charges drivers of older gas and diesel vehicles 12.50 pounds (USD 16) a day to move around the city. The charge was announced by then-Mayor Boris Johnson, a Conservative, in 2015 and took effect for central London in 2019.

Mayor Sadiq Khan plans to extend it next month to the city's less densely populated suburbs, where more people rely on cars

to get around. Labour Party leader Keir Starmer said the mayor should "reflect" on the policy in the wake of the loss in the Uxbridge and South Ruislip constituency. "I don't think there is any doubt that ULEZ was the reason that we lost the election in Uxbridge," he said.

But naturalist Chris Packham said Labour should not abandon green policies to achieve electoral gain. "Do you want to protect humanity and the rest of life on Earth, or is it just about you getting into office? They've got to stick to their guns here," he told Times Radio. The mayor argues that the policy has already cut air pollution in central London and will affect only one in 10 cars in areas like Uxbridge.

UK greenhouse gas emissions have fallen by 46 per cent from 1990 levels, mainly because of the almost complete removal of coal from electricity generation. The government had pledged to reduce emissions by 68 per cent of 1990 levels by 2030, to ban the sale of new

petrol and diesel cars the same year, and to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

But with just seven years to go until the first goalpost, the government's climate advisers said last month that the pace of action is "worryingly slow."

Some in the governing Conservative Party want to slow down even more. A right-wing group of Conservative lawmakers, the Net Zero Scrutiny Group, said the date for banning new petrol vehicles should be moved to 2035 or later. Conservative lawmaker Jacob Rees-Mogg said "getting rid of unpopular, expensive green policies" would be a vote-winner for the party, which is trailing well behind Labour in opinion polls. A national election is due by the end of 2024.

Housing Secretary Michael Gove told the Sunday Telegraph that a measure requiring landlords to improve the energy efficiency of rental accommodation was "asking too much, too quickly" and should be delayed by several years.

Israel PM Netanyahu undergoes pacemaker implantation surgery

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday underwent a successful pacemaker implantation procedure, a surgery scheduled just days before the Knesset is set to vote on a controversial judicial reform bill that has paralysed the whole country.

Last week, Netanyahu, 73, was hospitalised from Saturday to Sunday after he complained of dizziness following a trip Friday to the Sea of Galilee, where he acknowledged spending several hours in the sun and in scorching heat "without a hat, without water."

Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan then said that the doctors had completed a series of examinations and found that the Prime Minister's heart "is completely normal," and that "at no point was any heart arrhythmia found."

However, doctors "decided to use a subcutaneous Holter," a device that monitors one's heart and warns if there are irregularities. The pacemaker implantation procedure took place early Sunday morning at Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan. The Prime Minister's Office said the operation was completed successfully, that he was feeling good and that he was expected to be discharged Sunday.

In a video message shortly before 1 am Netanyahu said that "a week ago they put a monitoring device. That device beeped this evening and said I need to receive a pacemaker." "I need to do this already tonight. I'm feeling excellent, but I'm listening to my doctors," he stressed.

In an earlier statement, the Prime Minister's Office while informing about the procedure also quoted Netanyahu as saying that "the efforts to reach a wide agreement are continuing" on a divisive first bill of the government's highly contentious judicial overhaul that has paralysed the country. Implanting a pacemaker usually takes several hours and patients are typically discharged from the hospi-



tal in a day or two. The Prime Minister's office said that he was sedated during the procedure and the Minister of Justice and Deputy Prime Minister Yariv Levin served as acting prime minister while Netanyahu's surgery.

The announcement also came when the Knesset, Israel's parliament, was set to begin debating the bill on Sunday morning, ahead of its second and third — and final — readings, expected Monday or Tuesday.

The legislation, part of the wider plan to overhaul the judiciary, has drawn intense opposition, with hundreds of thousands protesting and many setting up a tent city near the Knesset, while some 10,000 reservists have said they will halt their volunteer duty if it passes into law.

The weekly cabinet meeting scheduled for Sunday morning was delayed to a yet-unknown time. Also postponed were key security discussions — including a reported planned meeting between the premier and IDF Chief of Staff Herzli Halevi — on the impact of the "reasonableness" bill and the reservists' threats on Israel's security.

Meanwhile, thousands of marchers reached Jerusalem Saturday, the culmination of a five-day walk from Tel Aviv to protest against Netanyahu's plans to weaken the powers of Israel's courts. The Knesset on Sunday will begin on a bill that would strip the Supreme Court of the power to declare government decisions "unreasonable," removing one of the few checks on the government in a country that has no written Constitution.

Spain: Right-wing Popular Party ahead in most opinion polls

AP ■ MADRID

Voters are going to the polls in Spain Sunday in a general election that could make the country the latest European Union member to swing to the political right.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez called the early election after his Spanish Socialist Workers Party and its far-left partner, Unidas Podemos, took a severe beating in local and regional elections in May. Sánchez has been premier since 2018.

Most opinion polls for Sunday's voting have put the right-wing Popular Party, which won the May vote, ahead of the Socialists but likely needing the support of the extreme right Vox party if they want to form a government.

Such a coalition would return a far-right force to the Spanish government for the first time since the country transitioned to democracy in the late 1970s following the nearly 40-year rule of dictator Francisco Franco.

A PP-Vox government would mean another EU member has moved firmly to the right, a trend seen recently in Sweden, Finland and Italy.



Onyx, right, a drag queen doing election work, watches a priest cast his ballot at a polling station for Spain's general election, in Madrid.

Countries such as Germany and France are concerned by what such a shift would portend for EU immigration and climate policies.

Spain's two main leftist parties are pro-EU participation. On the right, the PP, led by Alberto Núñez Feijóo, is also in favour of the EU. Vox, headed by Santiago Abascal, is opposed to EU interference in Spain's affairs.

The election comes as Spain holds the EU's rotating

presidency Sánchez had hoped to use the six-month term to showcase the advances his government had made. An election defeat for Sánchez could see the PP taking over the EU presidency reins.

He was one of the first to vote, casting his ballot in a polling station in Madrid.

Commenting later on the large number of foreign media covering the election, he said: "This means that what happens today is going to be very

important not just for us but also for Europe and I think that should also make us reflect."

"I don't want to say I'm optimistic or not. I have good vibrations," Sánchez added.

The Socialists and a new movement called Sumar that brings together 15 small leftist parties for the first time hope to pull off an upset victory. Sumar is led by second deputy prime minister Yolanda Díaz, the only woman among the top four candidates.

With no party expected to garner an absolute majority, the choice is basically between another leftist coalition and a partnership of the right and the far right.

Vox's Abascal said he "hoped for a massive mobilization (of voters) that will allow Spain to change direction."

Polling stations for the 37 million voters opened at 9 am (0700 GMT) and will close at 8 pm (1800 GMT). Near-final results are expected by midnight. Alejandro Bleda, 45, did not say who he voted for but indicated that he was backing the leftist parties. "Given the polarisation in this country, it's to vote either for 50 years of backwardness or for progress," he said.

At least 9 killed, 36 injured in Cameroon building collapse

Yaounde (AP): At least nine people were killed and nearly three dozen wounded in a building collapse, Cameroon authorities said on Sunday. A four-story building collapsed onto a smaller one early Sunday morning in Douala, the country's economic centre and largest city, 130 miles (210 km) west of the capital, Yaounde.

"The casualty figures may be higher. Rescue workers, assisted by Cameroon government troops, are still digging the wreckage to see if more bodies can be recovered," said Samuel Dieudonne Ivaha Diboua, governor of Cameroon's Littoral region.

The military's fire brigade has been ordered to join the country's Red Cross and other rescue services in searching for

survivors trapped under the rubble. Residents living in the Ndogbon neighbourhood where the incident took place said they are in shock.

"We heard people screaming ... and struggled to help some out of the wreckage, but could not do it with our spades and (garden) hoes," said Gaspard Ndogbo, who lives near the collapsed buildings.

Building collapses happen often in Douala, sometimes due to natural disasters such as landslides and other times because of poor construction, locals say.

Douala's city council is currently demolishing houses in high-risk zones susceptible to floods or landslides.

The building that collapsed on Sunday was not marked for demolition.

Highest denomination banknote to be issued in Myanmar

Bangkok (AP): The Central Bank of army-ruled Myanmar will issue a new banknote worth twice as much as the current highest denomination, state-run media reported Sunday, in a possible reaction to the economy becoming more unstable since the generals seized power in 2021. The reason for issuing a higher denomination note of 20,000 kyats (about \$9.50) was not explained.

Since the military ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, economic boycotts and sanctions imposed by Western nations have hurt both big businesses and ordinary people, many of whose lives have already been disrupted by civil war and the coronavirus pandemic.



Israelis protest against plans by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to overhaul the judicial system, in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Saturday. AP/PTI

Greek authorities evacuate 19,000 people as wildfire blazes on island of Rhodes

AP ■ ATHENS

Some 19,000 people have been evacuated from the Greek island of Rhodes as wildfires continued burning for a sixth day on three fronts, Greek authorities said on Sunday. The Ministry of Climate Change and Civil Protection said it was "the largest evacuation from a wildfire in the country."

Local police said that 16,000 people were evacuated by land and 3,000 by sea from 12 villages and several hotels.

Six people were briefly hospitalised with respiratory problems and were later released. A person who fell and broke their leg during a hotel evacuation and a pregnant woman remain hospitalised,

the latter in good condition, authorities say. Package holiday companies TUI and Jet2 have cancelled flights to Rhodes. Jet2 said it was cancelling five flights due to leave for Rhodes on Sunday. It said it would fly the five planes to Rhodes empty to bring back customers on the island. TUI said it was cancelling all its flights to the island until at least Tuesday.

British tourist Kevin Evans was evacuated twice on Saturday with his wife and three young children — first from Kiotari to Gennadi, then as the fire approached to the island's capital in the northeast, he told Britain's PA news agency. "There were lots of people in Gennadi sent from the hotels — many in just

swimsuits having been told to leave everything in the hotel," he told PA. "As night fell, we could see the fire on the top of the hills in Kiotari. They said all the hotels were on fire."

Rhodes travel agent Stelios Kotiadis confirmed to the Associated Press that the evacuation was hasty. "There was panic. ... The authorities were overwhelmed," he said.

But, he said, the abandoned hotels "are in much better condition than reported in social media. ... They will be ready to reopen very soon if Civil Protection gives the go-ahead." Kotiadis said he and other travel agents sent buses to the island's southeast to pick up evacuated tourists. They had to go the long way around, since the road running down



Flames rise during a forest fire on the island of Rhodes, Greece. AP/PTI

Rhodes' eastern side was blocked in places.

"There were 80-90 people cramming into 50-seater

buses," he said. He added that 90 per cent of the evacuated tourists are from European countries. The British ambas-

sador to Greece, Matthew Lodge, said the UK government was sending a rapid deployment team to support British nationals on Rhodes.

The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that personnel were on their way to Rhodes to set up a help desk at Rhodes International Airport for visitors who have lost their travel documents.

Fire Brigade spokesman Yannis Artopios said that, early Sunday afternoon, 266 firefighters and 49 engines were operating on the ground, together with hundreds of volunteers. Ten firefighting planes, including two from France, two from Turkey and one from Croatia, are operating in the area, as well as eight helicopters. There are substantial

reinforcements from the European Union.

"Over 450 firefighters and seven airplanes from the EU have been operating in Greece as fires sprout across the country," EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Janez Lenarcic tweeted early Sunday afternoon. In the mountainous part of Rhodes, an active front of the wildfire, firefighters have been trying to stop the blaze from spreading to nearby dense forests. Southwest of the resort of Kiotari, the main focus of Saturday's evacuations, a trench was being dug to keep the fire from crossing a creek and threatening the village of Gennadi. The weather remains hot in the Mediterranean country on Sunday. Before midday,

temperatures had already reached 38 C (100 F). Winds were low but are notoriously variable in Rhodes, as in other Greek islands. Some of the evacuated, including tourists, are being accommodated in other hotels, gyms and a conference centre.

A shipping company has offered one of its ships for accommodation. Kotiadis, the travel agent, told the Associated Press that three ships are being used. Authorities have designated an unprecedentedly large part of the mainland, the whole eastern part of central and southern Greece, plus the islands of Evia and Rhodes as well as large swaths of the southwest, as Category 5, the highest for risk of fire outbreaks as of Sunday.

Five of top-ten most valued firms add ₹4.23L crore in mcap

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Five of the top-10 most valued firms together added Rs 4,23,014.4 crore in market valuation last week, with major contributions coming in from HDFC Bank, which recently completed the merger with its mortgage financier parent HDFC.

HDFC Bank on Thursday became the second most valuable company by market capitalisation, overtaking IT behemoth Tata Consultancy Services.

Last week, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 623.36 points or 0.94 per cent.

While HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, ITC, State Bank of India and Bajaj Finance were the gainers, Reliance, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Hindustan Unilever, Infosys and Bharti Airtel suffered erosion from their market valuation last week.

HDFC Bank's market valuation jumped Rs 3,43,107.78 crore to reach Rs 12,63,070.52 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of State Bank of India zoomed Rs 27,220.07 crore to Rs 5,48,819.01 crore, and that



of ICICI Bank jumped Rs 24,575.78 crore to Rs 6,97,413.50 crore.

ITC added Rs 21,972.81 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 6,09,924.24 crore.

The mcap of Bajaj Finance climbed Rs 6,137.96 crore to Rs 4,59,425.99 crore.

However, the market valuation of Reliance Industries fell by Rs 1,37,138.56 crore to Rs 17,15,895.17 crore.

Reliance announced the demerger of its financial services undertaking into RSL (Reliance Strategic Investments Ltd), which was

renamed JFSL (Jio Financial Services Ltd).

NSE and BSE conducted a special pre-open session for Reliance Industries Ltd on Thursday on account of the demerger of its financial services business Reliance Strategic Investments Ltd.

Meanwhile, TCS mcap eroded by Rs 52,104.89 crore to Rs 12,32,953.95 crore and that of Infosys declined by Rs 39,406.08 crore to Rs 5,52,141.59 crore.

Shares of Infosys tanked over 8 per cent on Friday after the company reported a

lower-than-expected 11 per cent rise in net profit for the June quarter and slashed its FY24 growth outlook.

The valuation of Hindustan Unilever went lower by Rs 17,163.77 crore to Rs 6,11,786.57 crore, and that of Bharti Airtel dipped Rs 390.94 crore to Rs 4,94,726 crore.

In the ranking of top-10 firms, Reliance remained the most valued company, followed by HDFC Bank, TCS, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, ITC, Infosys, State Bank of India, Bharti Airtel and Bajaj Finance.

Indian mkt growing at good pace; overseas plans to be in place FY25 onwards: boAt's Aman

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The audio and wearables market in India is growing at a good pace, driving incremental revenue and production ramp-up plans for boAt, and the company's international blueprint will be set in motion only from FY25 onwards, its co-founder Aman Gupta has said.

The overseas plans are currently in the making, but for now, the company is determined to cement its position in the smartwatches segment, its biggest focus this year.

"For this year, our focus is not international...We are putting (building) blocks so that by next year, we should start looking at international...This year, we are trying to test the waters with some markets," Gupta told PTI.

Overall, boAt is targeting gross sales of about Rs 5,000 crore in FY24.

"The market is growing at a very good pace. In audio, we are the market leaders, while in wearables, we are competing with different players and competition keeps changing. The smartwatch market is growing at a high, good pace, and that is our biggest focus now, this year," he said.

For FY23, its total sales were over Rs 4,000 crore.

When boAt entered the audio segment, there were almost 200 brands, but the company cut through the clutter and over the last 10 quarters cemented its lead.

"So, when we do it we do it well," Gupta emphasised.

Unlike other players in the market, boAt has its own platform play, he said, adding "We have invested in KaHa technologies (end-to-end smart IoT product development company) to own our platform, design-wise, style-wise,



make in India wise...Everything is getting sorted," Gupta said.

"This is just the beginning," he promised and added, "We will come strong in smartwatches, as well."

Asked about the overseas market that seems to hold potential, Gupta cited markets

like Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia and the UAE.

"Still, it is too early to talk about international plans," he said.

On the manufacturing scale-up, Gupta said that at present in the watch segment, 75-80 per cent of boAt products are made in India, whereas the same for audio products stands at 30-50 per cent.

"Average of 60-70 per cent is what we are making in India. It is not easy to shift everything to India, immediately. It takes time...We are taking baby steps, we don't want to do it in a hurry," he said. Gupta highlighted that boAt will scale up production in India in both categories - audio and wearable.

"The Dixon JV is starting to get operational, and we will be shifting a lot of products and production to that JV," he said.

India's engineering exports see mixed fortunes in June; trade with Russia surges: EEPC

PTI ■ KOLKATA

India's engineering exports to major markets like the United States, the European Union (EU) and China continued to decline in June 2023, reflecting a challenging global trade environment, EEPC India said. The country's shipments to West Asia and North Africa (WANA), North East Asia, and CIS countries, however, showed positive growth during the same period, the Engineering Exports Promotion Council of India (EEPC) said.

India's engineering exports declined for the third straight month in June 2023, falling 11 per cent year-on-year to USD 8.53 billion.

The decline was led by a sharp fall in exports to the US, EU, and China, it said.

Exports to the US fell 12.5 per cent to USD 1.45 billion, while exports to the EU fell 16.2 per cent to USD 1.51 billion.

Exports to China fell 20 per cent to USD 184 million. However, an almost threefold increase in engineering exports to Russia reached a substantial USD 116.9 million in June 2023.

Cumulatively, during the April-June period of the current fiscal year, exports to Russia witnessed a remarkable four-fold surge, totalling USD 337.4 million compared to USD 89.7 million in the same period of the previous fiscal year. Experts pointed out that the metal sector, particularly steel, played a significant role in this downturn, owing to weakening global demand. Reports indicated that global steel demand weakened further due to slower offtake from China's construction sector.

"It is the metal sector that has been the most significant contributor to the decline. This has been a result of weakening global demand."

Ramkrishna Forgings Q1 net profit grows 63% to ₹77 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ramkrishna Forgings Ltd on Sunday reported a 63 per cent jump in its net profit to Rs 76.97 crore during the June quarter, on account of higher income.

It had clocked Rs 47.26 crore net profit in the April-June period of the preceding 2022-23 fiscal, Ramkrishna Forgings said in a statement.

The company's total income also rose to Rs 835.95 crore from Rs 650.75 crore in the year-ago quarter, posting a rise of 28 per cent.

Naresh Jalan, Managing Director, Ramkrishna Forgings Limited said: "We are actively working towards reducing our debt burden, targeting a debt to EBITDA level of 1:1 by FY 2024-25. This will strengthen our financial position, reduce risks, and provide us with flexibility to pursue growth opportunities."

Further, the company through automation and artificial intelligence, is in process of enhancing operational efficiency, increase productivity, and address evolving customer demands, he said.

On market risks, he said the company closely monitors macroeconomic risks, proactively mitigating them by prioritizing customer relationships and delivering excellent service.

Our strategic focus revolves around preparing for improved market conditions, ensuring that we are well-prepared to seize opportunities," Jalan said.

During the quarter, the company renewed the long term contract with additional new product range with "overseas Tier 1 customer" based in North America and also received an order worth 4.5 million euros from a prominent European railway passenger coach manufacturer.

Meta-owned Threads sees dip in user engagement

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

When Meta launched Threads, it was billed as a "Twitter-killer" as 100 million signed up within days of launch. But just like other rivals to Twitter, Threads seems to be losing traction.

New data apps tracking firm Sensor Tower indicates the hype has died down and Threads has seen a 20 per cent decrease in active users and a 50 per cent reduction in time spent on the app, from 20 minutes to 10 minutes.

Twitter has built its reputation around live breaking news, making it the go-to platform for millions during events -- political or entertainment. In contrast, Adam Mosseri, head of Instagram and Threads, has said on many occasions that Threads has no plan to bolster news and political content.

Also, Twitter allows users to operate anonymously, something that is not possible on Threads due to its direct integration with Instagram. A

significant portion of Twitter users remains anonymous, and Threads missed out on this segment of daily active users.

According to app intelligence firm data.ai, Threads had most downloads coming from India (33 per cent), followed by Brazil (22 per cent) and the US (16 per cent).

But everyone is not writing Threads off. Brands and creators maintain a wait-and-watch stance while content creators feel the app has nothing new to offer, and will probably not work.

Co-founder and COO of SUGAR Cosmetics Kaushik Mukherjee said that the brand has leveraged Threads to "deliver fun, witty content".

"Initially we witnessed a remarkable surge in user adoption and our team actively participated in this trend."

Remote working preferred by employees, say experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As remote working and flexible work arrangements take precedence over salary for a large number of jobseekers, experts see this as an opportunity to attract and retain talent.

According to a survey titled "The Job Search Process: A Look from the Inside Out", two thirds of respondents prioritise hybrid or remote working engagements. Also, 71 per cent of these respondents feel the freedom to work from home, setting flexible hours and taking breaks as needed were important factors in their job search.

The survey based on responses collected from 1,810 individuals, including 561 employers and 1,249 jobseekers, was carried out by jobsite Indeed India.

While 63 per cent of the job-seeker respondents registered their preference for hybrid working or a mix between working from home and office, 51 per cent of companies also reflected offering such flexibility in their operations.

Annanya Sarthak, co-founder and CEO of Awign -- a job search application for gig workers -- said: "Today's jobseekers are valuing work arrangements that provide flexibility, autonomy, and improved work-life balance. They desire greater control over their projects, schedules, and work location, aligning with their personal aspirations."

According to Sumit Sabharwal, CEO of TeamLease HRtech, companies can use this need of flexibility as a magnet for talent, and enhance their relationship with employees.

'Sales of affordable homes costing below ₹40 lakh dip 18% in 7 cities in Jan-Jun'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sales in the affordable housing category -- priced below Rs 40 lakh -- declined 18 per cent to 46,650 units in the January-June period across seven major cities amid lower supply and a rise in mortgage rates, according to Anarock.

Sales of affordable homes stood at 57,060 units in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Real estate consultant Anarock's report showed that the share of affordable housing in the overall housing sales fell to 20 per cent in January-June from 31 per cent in the corresponding period of the previous year.

The total housing sales increased to 2,28,860 units during January-June this year from 1,84,000 units in the year-ago period.

Anarock Chairman Anuj Puri attributed the shrinking share of affordable homes in the overall sales to changes in demand dynamics induced by the COVID pandemic and sev-



eral other challenges faced by developers as well as consumers.

Stating that the land cost has gone up significantly, Puri said, "It is becoming increasingly unviable for developers to buy land at higher prices to build low-margin mass housing." Other input costs have also risen inexorably in the last few years, he added.

"Launching affordable housing projects has become unattractive," Puri said.

Prospective home buyers in the affordable segment are postponing their purchase decision

due to the rise in housing prices as well as interest rates on home loans, Anarock said.

On the supply side, the data showed that the share of affordable homes in total new launches across seven cities stood at 18 per cent in January-June against 23 per cent in the year-ago period.

Commenting on the report, Signature Global, which is mainly into affordable, founder Pradeep Aggarwal said the decline in sales of affordable housing units can be attributed to the limited supply of such properties.

"In recent years, the increased costs of land and inputs have left developers with limited room to create affordable housing options," he said. However, Aggarwal said, the Haryana government's recent revision in affordable housing policy will lead to an increase in the supply.

He also demanded that other states should follow suit and offer incentives to developers to support the affordable housing sector.

Leasing of industrial warehousing space in Apr-Jun down 12%: Colliers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leasing of Industrial & Warehousing spaces during April-June fell 12 per cent year-on-year to 40 lakh square feet area across five major cities mainly due to lower demand in Delhi-NCR and Chennai, according to Colliers.

Real estate consultant Colliers India released its India industrial and warehousing market snapshot for the April-June quarter of this calendar year, showing the gross leasing in April-June across five cities fell 44 pc from the previous quarter.

As per the data, leasing of industrial and warehousing space in Pune region rose 15 per cent to 10 lakh (1 million) square feet during April-June period.

Mumbai also saw a 12 per cent increase in demand to 9 lakh (0.9 million) square feet in the second quarter of this calendar year.

The leasing in Bengaluru went up 17 pc to 7 lakh (0.7 million) square feet during April-June.

However, the demand remained subdued in Chennai and Delhi-NCR.

The absorption of industrial and warehousing space in Delhi-NCR fell sharply by 49 per cent to 7 lakh (0.7 million) square feet, while the demand dropped 28 per cent in Chennai to 7 lakh (0.7 million) square feet during the quarter ended June.

Reliance Retail revamping Trends stores with new-age, tech-enabled features

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Retail said it is revamping Trends fashion stores across the county by adding contemporary and tech-enabled features ranging from self-checkout counters to electronic shelf labels to attract customers of younger generations.

Reliance Retail is revamping around 150 Trends stores pan-India with a new brand identity. The stores will have a new look right from the façade to fixtures, lighting, ceiling and flooring, becoming more aspirational for shoppers, the retailer said.

Trends, an affordable fashion & lifestyle retailer

which operates more than 2,300 stores in over 1,100 towns and cities across India, has opened its first such store with a new brand identity in Surat with several more in the pipeline to be opened shortly.

Now all new Trends stores to be opened by Reliance Retail in the future will be based on the new format, which may also have a dedicated space for local artesian to showcase the city's identity.

Reliance Fashion & Lifestyle President & CEO Akhilesh Prasad said consumers nowadays are demanding fresh and unique experiences.

Hindustan Zinc keen to participate in lithium auctions, says CEO Arun

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) is keen to acquire lithium assets as and when they are put on the block for auctions, CEO Arun Mishra said.

Lithium reserves of about 5.9 million tonnes have been identified in Salal-Haimna areas of Reasi district in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) for the first time in India.

Auctions of the said reserves are likely to be held in December. The J&K administration is also in the process of

appointing a transaction advisor.

"Absolutely. Why not?" Hindustan Zinc is already in the base metal (sector). Whatever lithium asset will come it will be strategic interest, Mishra told PTI in reply to a question on plans of acquiring lithium reserves.

The CEO further said, "As base metals are our (company's) area of interest and lithium being one of them, we look forward to exploring the opportunities as such metals are going to be the future which will drive the new world."

Therefore, HZL is open to participate in auctions for the lithium reserves, he added.

Lithium is a non-ferrous metal and is one of the key components of batteries used in electric vehicles (EVs), a segment which is on growth path in India.

On the company's plan about offer for sale (OFS), Mishra said, "It is in the hands of the government of India and I'm sure they're looking for suitable opportunity in the market..."

Adani's \$1.1 bn copper project to start operations from Mar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Gautam Adani-led group's copper-producing factory at Mundra in Gujarat will start operations from March next year, helping cut India's dependence on imports and aiding energy transition, sources said.

Copper is known as the "metal of electrification" as deeper electrification requires wires, which are primarily made from copper. Technologies critical to the energy transition like electric vehicles (EVs), charging

infrastructure, solar photovoltaics (PV), wind and batteries, all require copper.

Kutch Copper Ltd (KCL), a subsidiary of the group's flagship Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL), is setting up a greenfield copper refinery project for the production of refined copper with 1 million tonnes per annum in two phases.

For Phase-1, capacity of 0.5 million tonnes per annum, KCL has achieved financial closure through a syndicated club loan, sources with direct knowledge of the matter said.

The first phase is expected to become operational by the end of the current fiscal, they said.

Adani, at the company's AGM a few days back, stated, "Of the several projects underway, two of the key ones include the Navi Mumbai Airport and the Copper Smelter, and both are on schedule."

The Rs 8,783 crore-greenfield project completed a full debt tie-up with a consortium of banks led by SBI earlier this year, they said, adding the entire



debt requirement of Rs 6,071 crore for Phase-1 has been provided by the consortium of banks.

The equity for the project has been invested by the parent Adani Enterprises Ltd. In addition, it has got all the major approvals in place to ensure timely execution.

Copper is the third most used industrial metal after steel and aluminium, and its demand is rising on the back of fast-growing renewable energy, telecom and electric vehicle industries.

India's copper production has been unable to meet this demand, and domestic supply disruptions have led to a higher dependency on imported copper. India's imports have been consistently on the rise for the past five years.

For FY23 (April 2022 to March 2023 fiscal), India imported a record 1,81,000 tonnes of copper, while exports plummeted to a record low of 30,000 tonnes, even lower than the pandemic period, according to the data from the government.

The country is estimated to have consumed 7,50,000 tonnes of copper in FY23 (612 KT in FY22). The number is expected to rise to 1.7 million tonnes by 2027 on the back of huge demand from the green energy industry. Global demand for copper from solar photovoltaic (PV) installations alone is estimated to double to 2.25 million tonnes in the current decade.

Adani group, which is rapidly growing its renewable portfolio, will be a significant consumer of the red metal, sources said.

CONSISTENT CONQUERORS

Satwik-Chirag win fourth title of year at Korea Open

PTI ■ YEOSU

India's Satwicksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty continued their dream run, clinching the men's doubles title at the Korea Open with a gritty three-game win over world number one Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Rian Ardianto in the final here on Sunday.

Playing their fourth final of the year, the world No. 3 Indians rallied their way to a 17-21, 21-13, 21-14 win over the two-time world championships bronze medallists Alfian and Ardianto in a thrilling summit clash of the Super 500 badminton tournament. "The way we played today in the finals, didn't start off that well but happy that we could win that second game and keep the momentum until the very end. Yes, extremely happy that we could win consecutive titles after the Indonesia Open," Chirag said after the match.

The reigning Commonwealth Games champions thus extended their winning streak to 10 matches. It was another feather on their cap, following their victory at the Swiss Open, Asian Championships and Indonesia Open this year.

"It's been pretty good week for us. We played some amazing badminton throughout the week here and I am happy with the performance today. We want to continue with the same momentum next week at Japan Open. So, we'll go back now, rest and focus again," Satwik said.

The Indian pair had a 2-2 head-to-head count against Asian Games silver medallists Alfian and Ardianto but they had beaten the Indonesians on last two occasions.

The Indians looked a little subdued in the beginning as they trailed in the opening game but they recovered in the fag end, narrowing a 10-19 deficit with a six-point burst before falling short.



However, they found the momentum in the second game and dominated the proceedings thereafter to come up trumps.

The Indonesians played flat rallies at a high pace to open up a 4-2 lead early on. The Indians were pegged back as Alfian and Ardianto didn't allow their opponents to mount their attack.

Errors also crept in as Satwik and Chirag conceded a seven-point advantage to their rivals at the break.

The Indians won a few quick

points but the Indonesians managed to move away to 16-7 after Ardianto smashed one down the middle.

Another down-the-middle smash from Ardianto took the Indonesians to 19-11. Satwik and Chirag won next three points before playing an exciting rally which ended with the Indonesians going to the net.

A booming jump smash from Satwik further cut down the deficit to three points but he sent one wide to hand four game points to the Indonesians.

The Indians saved one with Chirag's cross court return before Satwik sprayed one to the net.

The second game started on an even keel with the two pairs engaging in some delectable rallies. The Indians infused more power and pace into their game as they started to dominate the proceedings.

The Indians opened up a slender 6-4 lead after a Chirag interception and maintained it till 10-8, with Satwik unleashing his trademark smash.

The Indian duo had a cushion of three points at the break when the Indonesians went wide. A cross court return from the front court from Chirag took them to 17-11.

Soon Satwik and Chirag grabbed nine game points. They squandered two before Chirag sent one down the middle to take the match to the decider.

Satwik and Chirag looked in control in the third game, eking out a 9-6 lead before going into the interval at 11-8.

The Indians were more aggressive and managed to keep the world number 1 pair under the pump.

After resumption, a Chirag interception helped the Indians keep the three-point lead at 13-10. Alfian and Ardianto looked a pale shadow as nothing was going their way.

Satwik and Chirag also dominated the flat exchanges and soon it became 18-12 in favour of the Indians. Alfian produced a superb backhand return but sprayed the next one to the net to hand over seven match points to the Indians.

They wasted one before converting the next, and broke into a Gangnam style dance to celebrate their victory.

Since pairing up, Satwik and Chirag have won multiple titles, including Commonwealth Games gold, Thomas Cup gold, bronze medal in World Championships and collected wins in Super 300 (Syed Modi and Swiss Open), Super 500 (Thailand and India Open), Super 750 (French Open) and Indonesia Open Super 1000.

The BWF World Tour is divided into six levels: World Tour Finals, four Super 1000, six Super 750, seven Super 500, and 11 Super 300.

The other category of the tournament, the BWF Tour Super 100 level, also offers ranking points.



Nagal wins Tampere Open title

PTI ■ TAMPERE

Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal beat Dalibor Srvcina of the Czech Republic in straight sets to clinch the Tampere Open title here.

Nagal beat Srvcina 6-4, 7-5 to emerge victorious.

It happens to be Nagal's fourth ATP Challenger title in five outings, with this being his second crown this year, having won the Garden Open in Rome in April.

Nagal was off to a wobbly start to the match, losing his first serve game as Srvcina raced to a 3-0 lead and extended it to 4-1.

However, the Indian immediately regained his composure and broke back successively on three instances to send the Czech onto the backfoot, as the seventh-seeded Indian seized the opening set 6-4, thanks to some great play from the baseline.

Having shown composure in the latter stages of the opening set, Nagal started positively in the following set

and broke Srvcina to race to a 4-1 lead. However, the fifth-seed Czech used his smartness and instantly broke back to have things back on serve.

Regardless, the break wasn't enough to trouble Nagal, as he upped his ante and re-broke Srvcina, eventually taking a 5-3 lead.

Srvcina was in no mood to go down without a fight, and engaged in some brutal exchange of shots during the Indian's serve and broke back again for a glimmer of hope to take the match to the decider.

But, it appeared to be that kind of day for Srvcina where he put his best, only to be quickly overpowered by Nagal.

At 5-5, Nagal broke Srvcina yet again, leading 6-5. Serving it out for the championship, the Czech engaged in some last-gasp power-hitting and saved three match points. Finally, he fell in the fourth match point, as the Indian closed the contest in an hour and 44 minutes.

Bruno, Sancho shine in friendly

AP ■ NEW YORK

Bruno Fernandes and Jadon Sancho were on target as Manchester United beat Arsenal 2-0 in a friendly front of 82,262 fans at MetLife Stadium on Saturday.

The New York and New Jersey fans of the two Premier League clubs saw a lively first half with both goals, but the game lost its way in the second half with mass substitutions from both teams.

United's new Cameroonian goalkeeper Andre Onana, signed from Inter Milan on Thursday in a £44 million deal, did not feature despite flying out to join the team's tour in the United States.

Back-up Tom Heaton started in goal with Fernandes wearing the captain's armband after replacing defender Harry Maguire in that role.

United took the lead on the half hour mark, with Fernandes cutting in from the right and unleashing a low left-foot drive which deceived Arsenal keeper Aaron Ramsdale.

Seven minutes later, Sancho doubled the lead when Arsenal defender Gabriel mis-kicked on the half-way line and the England forward burst away before blasting confidently home.

With United still searching for a central striker in the transfer market, Sancho played in a central role, rather than his usual position on the wing, and handled the switch well.

With both Erik Ten Hag and Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta making full use of their squads after the break there was an inevitable loss of intensity and United's lead was never in danger.

There was an encouraging display from 18-year-old Kobbie Mainoo in the centre of



United's midfield and Fernandes was full of praise for the academy product.

There was an unusual situation at the end of the game

with both teams having agreed to take part in a penalty shoot-out regardless of the result.

Although there was nothing at stake in the shoot-out,

which United won 5-3, both managers had agreed to take the chance to test their players' mettle from the spot as a useful experience.

Chelsea beat 10-man Brighton 4-3

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Mykhailo Mudryk finally found the net for Chelsea and new signings Christopher Nkunku and Nicolas Jackson also scored in a 4-3 friendly win over Brighton in Philadelphia on Saturday.

Brighton took the lead in 13th minute when a short corner routine ended with Kaoru Mitoma heading the ball across the box and Danny Welbeck firing home with a first-time drive.

French forward Nkunku, a recent acquisition from RB Leipzig for a reported £63 million (\$80 million) brought the London club level in the 19th minute for his second goal of pre-season.

Brighton were reduced



to ten men in the 59th minute when Dutch full-back Jan Paul van Hecke received a second yellow card after a reckless challenge on Cesare Casadei.

Five minutes later

Chelsea went ahead when Ukrainian Mudryk burst in from the left and after a smart exchange with Jackson, unleashed a drive into the bottom corner from outside the box.

It was the first Chelsea goal for Mudryk who joined the club in a huge deal, reportedly costing up to 100 million euros (£88 million, \$108 million) in January.

Senegal international Jackson then set up Conor Gallagher to make it 3-1 and got on the scoresheet himself with the fourth for Mauricio Pochettino's team.

A 79th minute penalty from Joao Pedro gave Brighton some hope but although substitute Deniz Undav added a late third for Albion, Chelsea secured the win.

Swedes scrape past SA, Dutch do enough at Women's WC

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Sweden were given a scare by South Africa before winning 2-1 at the death at the Women's World Cup on Sunday while 2019 finalists the Netherlands also began their campaign with victory by a single goal.

France, who have never lifted the World Cup but are among the favourites in Australia and New Zealand, played a goalless draw against Jamaica in Sydney in the last match of the day.

The third-ranked Swedes fought back from a goal down and conjured up the winner in the 90th minute through Arsenal defender Amanda Ilestedt, much to the relief of their fans in miserably wet conditions in Wellington.

A goal early in the second



half by Hildah Magaia -- in which she suffered a match-ending injury -- had given South Africa hope of an upset in front of 18,317 spectators.

But that was soon cancelled out by Barcelona star Fridolina Rolfö before Ilestedt's late intervention, heading home from close range for a hard-fought vic-

tory.

It denied the African champions a first point ever at the World Cup.

The Dutch, losers 2-0 to the United States in the final four years ago, had less trouble against debutants Portugal in the New Zealand city of Dunedin.

Defender Stefanie van der

Gragt put them on their way after 13 minutes with a powerful header from a corner.

The Netherlands now face holders the United States on Thursday in a rematch of their final, with Group E supremacy at stake.

Two-times former champions Germany enter the fray on Monday when they face World Cup debutants Morocco.

Germany are among the favourites to win the tournament but their coach Martina Voss-Tecklenburg warned that women's football has never been more competitive.

Also on Monday, Brazil play Panama.

Co-hosts New Zealand return to action on Tuesday to begin the second round of group matches.

Tropical downpour sinks Spurs-Leicester friendly

AP ■ BANGKOK

Tottenham's pre-season preparations suffered a blow on Sunday as their friendly against Leicester in Bangkok was called off because of a waterlogged pitch.

New coach Ange Postecoglou named a strong starting XI for the clash with the Foxes including unsettled striker Harry Kane. But a huge tropical downpour left the pitch at the Rajamangala stadium unplayable and the match was called off around half an hour after the scheduled kick-off time.



Max Wins Hungarian GP

AP ■ BUDAPEST

Formula One champion Max Verstappen needed only a few seconds to stamp his authority on the Hungarian Grand Prix on Sunday and win his seventh straight race of a crushingly dominant season.

Seven-time F1 champion Lewis Hamilton started from pole position ahead of Verstappen, who muscled him out at the first corner and never looked back.

Red Bull's 12th straight win, including the final race of 2022, broke McLaren's record for consecutive team wins set in 1988.

"That was so enjoyable to drive, 12 in a row that is unbelievable," Verstappen said. "Unbelievable. I was really enjoying that last stint."

Verstappen is cruising toward a third straight F1 title. His ninth victory overall - complete with another bonus point for the fastest lap - means the 25-year-old Dutchman already leads his

Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez by 110 points.

McLaren driver Lando Norris finished second for the second-straight race and Perez was third for a much-needed second podium in six races. Verstappen's career win total now stands at 44 - the same number as Hamilton's car.

Hamilton started from pole for the first time since the penultimate race of 2021 in Saudi Arabia - which was also when he won his record-extending 103rd F1 race. He has not won since.

He felt he had a chance after an impressive drive in qualifying. But Verstappen, who won from 10th here last year, overtook a sluggish Hamilton as they dived into the first turn, while the McLaren drivers of Norris and Oscar Piastri jumped past Hamilton and dropped him down to fourth. That is where he finished at the sinewy 4.4-kilometer (2.7-mile) Hungaroring track, one of the hardest in F1 for overtaking.

Titmus reclaims world record with dominant 400 freestyle win

AP ■ FUKUOKA

Australia's Ariarne Titmus reclaimed her 400m freestyle world record and took gold after a dominant win over rivals Katie Ledecky and Summer McIntosh at the world championships on Sunday.

Titmus came home in 3 min, 55.38 sec to take back the record that McIntosh had wrested from her in March this year. Ledecky finished the race second in 3:58.73 but McIntosh could only place fourth, with New Zealand's Erika Fairweather taking third in 3:59.59.

The race was one of the most hotly anticipated of the world championships on the opening night in the southern Japanese city of Fukuoka.

It pitted Olympic champion Titmus against world record-holder McIntosh and defending world champion Ledecky.

But Titmus led the race from start to finish, breaking McIntosh's previous benchmark of 3:56.08.

Titmus had added a little spice to the build-up by questioning McIntosh's ability to handle the pressure of the big occasion.

Ledecky had laid down a marker earlier in the day, finishing fastest in the morning heats ahead of Titmus and McIntosh.

Ledecky was aiming to add to her 19 world titles, already a record for a woman.

Marquinhos hopes for solution to Mbappe dispute

AP ■ PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain captain Marquinhos on Sunday said he hoped the club would solve its dispute with Kylian Mbappe and welcome the France superstar back into the squad for the upcoming season.

Mbappe was left out of a squad of 29 players for the French champions' pre-season tour of Japan and South Korea amid an ongoing contract dispute.

"He is an exceptional player but it is a decision that was taken over our heads, by the management," Marquinhos told reporters in the Japanese city of Osaka. He admitted it was a

"delicate" subject.

"Even in Japan you are here with your questions," he complained, although new coach Luis Enrique, sitting alongside the Brazilian, escaped without being asked about Mbappe.

"We always want to have top players with us and I hope a decision will be taken to allow him to be with us and help us this season," Marquinhos added.

The 24-year-old Mbappe has said he will not extend his existing deal with the Qatar-owned club, which expires next year, and PSG therefore decided not to take him on the trip east. He has said he wants to remain in Paris for one more year, but PSG say they would



prefer to sell him in this transfer window rather than seeing him depart as a free agent in 2024.

The move can therefore be interpreted as PSG putting pressure on the club's all-time top scorer to either sign a new deal or agree a transfer elsewhere.

Luis Enrique therefore faces the prospect of having to do without PSG's leading scorer from last season at least until the transfer window shuts at the start of September.

Mbappe first joined PSG from Monaco in August 2017 and signed a new deal a year ago, that two-year contract including the option for a third season, to 2025, which the player could take up if he wished.

PSG believe that the player already has an agreement in place with Real Madrid to sign for the Spanish giants as a free agent after the upcoming season.

Sources close to the player also assure that he has a huge offer from a club in Saudi

Arabia, although a move there seems highly unlikely.

PSG, without Mbappe but with his younger brother Ethan, are due to face Al-Nassr, the Saudi club for whom Cristiano Ronaldo plays, in a friendly in Osaka on Tuesday.

TELLS JOINS AL-NASSR

Alex Telles joined the slew of football stars heading to Saudi Arabia by completing a move from Manchester United to Al-Nassr on Sunday.

The Brazil international spent last season on loan at Sevilla, where he won the Europa League and reunites with his former United teammate Cristiano Ronaldo.

INDIA SKITTLE OUT WEST INDIES FOR 255



PTI ■ PORT OF SPAIN

Mohammed Siraj secured a career-best five-wicket haul with a sizzling spell as India bowled out the West Indies for 255 to take a healthy 183-run first innings lead on day four of the second Test here on Sunday.

Siraj ended with figures of five for 60 in 23.4 overs after running through the West Indies lower-order. The hosts, who resumed the day at 229 for five, lost five wickets for 26 runs in the morning session to concede a huge advantage to India.

The visitors came out all guns blazing in their second innings and were 98 for one in just 12 overs before rain forced early lunch, extending their lead to 281 runs.

Rohit Sharma (57 off 44) and Yashuvi Jaiswal (37 batting off 28) batted on T20 mode considering the stage

of the game.

Rohit, who was dropped twice during his whirlwind knock, was finally caught at fine leg off Shannon Gabriel towards the end of the morning session. The India skipper brought up his fastest Test fifty off 35 balls.

Siraj, who is the leader of India's pace attack in the Caribbean in the absence of Mohammed Shami and injured Jasprit Bumrah, has embraced the responsibility.

The West Indies batters found him unplayable as the 29-year-old, like he often does, used the scrambled seam to perfection.

However, it was debutant Mukesh Kumar who triggered the West Indies collapse by trapping southpaw Alick Athanaze (37) in front with an inswinger in the first over of the day. Play began half hour before scheduled time after time was lost due to rain on day three.

Siraj's first wicket of the day was Jason Holder who fished at a full ball swinging away to be caught behind. Next to depart was Alzarri Joseph, who had little clue about Siraj's sharp incoming ball and was trapped LBW after India successfully reviewed the on-field call of not out.

Siraj completed his second five wicket haul of his Test career with another quick scrambled seam delivery that was too good for number 11 Gabriel.

India came out to bat with an ultra aggressive approach. The first over of the innings went for 11 runs as Jaiswal stepped out to dispatch Kemar Roach over cover for a six before flicking him for a boundary.

Rohit, who smashed three sixes and five fours in his entertaining effort, nonchalantly flicked Roach for his first maximum. It was all timing as the ball sailed over wide long-on.



They didn't even try playing shots, Mhambrey on WI batters

PTI ■ PORT OF SPAIN

India's bowling coach Paras Mhambrey has dubbed the pitch used for the second Test as "very, very slow for batting" and criticised the West Indians for "not even trying" to play shots.

Down 0-1 in the two-match series, the West Indies, in response to India's first-innings total of 438, looked in no hurry to score through the third day's play at Queen's Park Oval.

"The pitch is very slow, very easy for batting. Towards the end, it started turning a bit. West Indies were defensive with the bat too. When there's an attempt to play shots, there's an opportunity to get a wicket but they didn't even try that."

"We were quite impressive, our bowlers did whatever was expected of them

though," Mhambrey said at the end of day's play.

The former Mumbai and India seamer added, "I think the pitch should be sporting. There has to be a balance - something for batters and bowlers."

He said taking 20 wickets on this pitch is a difficult proposition.

"Yes, Dominica pitch had turned but we utilised the conditions better, the quality of our bowlers allowed us to use it well. On this pitch though it will be hard to take 20 wickets."

"First target is to get them all out in the first innings and then see what lies ahead. Obviously, it's hard work for bowlers on such wickets but yeah, they shouldn't be so flat. It's not entertaining, you want to get results."

India won the first Test in Dominica comfortably to go 1-0 in the rubber.

Joshua reveals how Kohli made his mother's 'day & year'

PTI ■ PORT OF SPAIN

India have the upper hand in the ongoing second and final Test against the West Indies at the Queen's Park Oval, thanks to Virat Kohli's knock of 121.

Meanwhile, the 34-year-old Indian also impressed off the field when he met Caribbean wicket-keeper Joshua Da Silva's mother, with the Trinidadian revealing that the meeting made his mom's "day & year".

In a video posted on social



media by the BCCI, Da Silva said that his mother arrived at the venue to meet the Indian talisman rather than her son.

"My mom told me two days before the Test match that she will come to see Virat Kohli, not me. That was kind of funny. It just so happened that he was on the bus. So, I went and knocked on the window. He came out and met my mom, made her day, made her year probably," he said in the video, where it is shown that Kohli shares a smile with Da Silva's mother, while the latter is also seen hugging him and is visibly excited to meet him in person.

Pakistan A humble India A by 128 runs to win title



PTI ■ COLOMBO

Tayyab Tahir's exceptional hundred garnished Pakistan A's march to a commanding 128-run win over India A, for a second consecutive Emerging Teams Asia Cup title, here on Sunday.

Once Pakistan posted a mammoth 352 for eight courtesy Tahir's 108 off 71 balls (12x4s, 4x6s), the result was in no real doubt.

India made a fist of it, but ended up at 224 all out in 40 overs to suffer their first defeat in this tournament.

From the toss, everything went south for India, who asked Pakistan to bat first - a decision which was a tad puzzling because the chasing team had lost eight matches in the tournament.

However, Pakistan A, who fielded as many as eight players with international experience, were in mood to give a return gift to India A, who fielded a purely U-23 side with no experience of top-flight cricket.

Pakistan went off the blocks like a supercharged car, scoring over six runs and the run-rate subsequently crossed the seven-runs-per-over mark. Openers Saim Ayub (59 off 51 balls) and Sahibzada Farhan (65 off 62 balls) added 121 runs in just 17.2 overs, fully utilising a fresh surface and hard ball.

Just as Pakistan seemed to have got a measure of Indian bowlers, they stormed into the match. Left-arm spinner Manav Suthar took his 11th wicket of the tournament when he jettisoned Ayub.

In the next 11-over passage, they gave away 66 runs but plucked 4 wickets as Pakistan slumped to 187 for 5.

Leg-spinner Rryan Parag too chipped in as he took two wickets in as many balls, dismissing Omair Yousuf and Qasim Akram.

However, Tahir quelled India's hopes of bundling out Pakistan early with an innings of rare quality.

Around the 30th over, the ball began to slightly grip the surface but Tahir played through the line, exhibiting timing and power.

India's success in this tournament was built around their spin trio of Suthar, Nishant Sindhu and Abhishek Sharma, but Tahir invalidated their presence with a fine array of shots.

The right-hander, who made his Pakistan senior team debut earlier this year, played cuts, drives, pulls and ramps at will to bring up a 66-ball 100.

He found an able sidekick in Mubasir Khan while milking 126 runs for the sixth wicket in just 16 overs, as they ran roughshod over Indian bowlers. The partnership also carried Pakistan past 300.

India did not seem perturbed by the massiveness of the target as B Sai Sudarshan and Abhishek amassed 64 runs for the opening wicket in 8.3 overs.

Pacer Arshad Iqbal broke the alliance, inducing an edge from Sudarshan for Mohammad Haris to complete an easy catch behind the stumps.

Abhishek completed a fifty (61, 51 balls) but once he departed, the rest of the Indian batters struggled to cope with the ever-mounting asking rate, perishing at regular intervals.

Chinaman bowler Sufiyan Muqeem picked up three wickets to inflict maximum damage.

Pace bowlers in focus as Deodhar Trophy returns after four years

PTI ■ PUDUCHERRY

The focus will be on players, especially pacers, who could potentially form the core of India's white ball and A teams when the Deodhar Trophy kicks off here on Monday.

Over the next 11 days, a clutch of aspirants will be eager to showcase their readiness to carry the India mantle forward while competing for South Zone, North Zone, West Zone, East Zone, Central Zone and North East Zone.

For the premier List A tournament itself, this is a significant moment as it is returning after a gap of four years.

That importance is further accentuated by the presence of some players whose outings will be closely monitored as the senior side has gradually embraced a transition phase.

There will be an extra focus on the pacers, considering some of the premier names are still shaking off the wear and tear of international workload and injuries.

In near future, India will have to field a second line of quicks behind Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami and Mohammad Siraj, and the Deodhar Trophy presents a bril-



liant chance for the selectors to cast an eye on possible candidates.

Talking about the candidates, none have been more impressive than the Karnataka duo of Vidwath Kaverappa and Vysakh Vijayakumar.

The pacers had exceptional outings in the Duleep Trophy semifinal and final while turning out for the South Zone.

Vidwath and Vysakh combined to pick 24 wickets between them in those two matches, and they will be eager to keep the attention on them with another round of impact performance.

Akash Madhwal might be 29 but the Uttarakhand pacer has made the people notice him with a string of productive efforts, particularly in the IPL

2023. The Mumbai Indians pacer has a skiddy action and considerable speed that can unsettle the best in the business.

A rewind to MI's match against Lucknow Super Giants in which he took five wickets conceding just 5 runs will vouch for that.

Arjun Tendulkar, who recently shifted to Goa in the domestic circuit, will turn out for the South Zone here.

The left-arm speedster would like to register his name among the hopefuls with some good outings here.

Some of the other aspirants such as Nikin Jose, Harshit Rana, Nishant Sindhu and B Sai Sudarshan will join the tournament after the Emerging Asia Cup in Colombo.

Thirimanne retires from international cricket

PTI ■ CHENNAI

After a 12-year career, Sri Lankan batter Lahiru Thirimanne has announced his retirement from international cricket.

The 33-year-old Lankan featured in 44 Tests, 127 One-Day Internationals and 26 T20 Internationals, having made his debut in 2010.

He played for Sri Lanka in three ICC T20 World Cups, including the 2014 edition where the side emerged victorious. Besides, he also featured in a couple of ODI World Cups. He also had the honour of leading the team in five ODIs.

"As a player, I have given my best, I have tried my best, I have respected the game, and I have done my duty honestly and ethically to my motherland," Thirimanne wrote on Facebook.

"It was a difficult decision to make, but I cannot mention here the many unexpected reasons that influenced me to take this decision willingly or unwillingly."

"I take this opportunity to thank the SLC members, my coaches, teammates, physios,



trainers and analysts for their support and encouragement," he added.

Thirimanne played his final international tie for Sri Lanka in March 2022 -- a Test against India in Bengaluru. In his prime, he was considered one of the most prolific batters of the side, especially in the 50-over format, scoring 3,194 runs

in 106 innings at an average of 34.71, including four tons and 24 half-centuries.

Taking to Instagram, he wrote, "Absolute honour to have the opportunity to represent the country. Thanks a lot for the 13 years of amazing memories and well wishes throughout my journey. See you on the other side."

Aus retains Ashes as rain ruins Eng's hopes

PTI ■ MANCHESTER

Australia retained the Ashes after rain prevented any play on the final day of the fourth test against England at Old Trafford on Sunday after weeks of blockbuster entertainment in the closest and most exciting Ashes contest since 2005.

Australia has an insurmountable 2-1 lead with one test left. England needed to win the five-match series to take the urn off holder Australia.

A shootout for glory in the fifth test at the Oval starting Thursday was on the cards if there had been enough time for England to convert its dominance in Manchester with Australia 214-5 in its second innings and 61 runs behind the hosts.

The fifth-day washout handed the urn to Australia as the most pessimistic forecasts came to pass and relentless rain meant the players never made it to the middle in a miserable



weekend for England. Only 30 overs had been possible on Saturday.

England arrived Sunday needing five wickets to get over the line but left without a

ball being bowled.

England has all but eliminated the concept of the draw since captain Ben Stokes and head coach Brendon McCullum ushered in the fast-

scoring Bazball era more than a year ago, but for the first time in 17 games at the helm conditions finally left them with no cards to play.

Instead, dreams of a stir-

ring comeback to beat its rivals for the first time since 2015 were swept away.

Australia was more than happy to finish the job in the pavilion rather than out on the pitch, but any post-match celebrations may be slightly muted after this narrow escape.

There is still plenty to play for, with Australia bidding to claim a first outright win on English soil in 22 years while their opponents are seeking to level the series at 2-2 and preserve an undefeated streak under Stokes' leadership.

England had made all the running here, piling up a 275-run first-innings advantage and taking five of the 10 wickets it needed to finish the job before the skies turned against them.

Five of the last six sessions were lost without a ball bowled.

The momentum of the series had swung when England captain Ben Stokes embarked on a six-hitting rampage in the fourth innings of

the second test at Lord's, apparently sparked into life by Alex Carey's controversial stumping of Jonny Bairstow, and although his magnificent century was not enough to save that game, it set things on a new path.

England won the third test at Headingley in relatively comfortable fashion - the first of three must-win games - and spent the first three days on the other side of the Pennines establishing an even more dominant position at Old Trafford.

Zak Crawley's outrageous 189 and an unbeaten 99 from Bairstow saw them pile up 592, England's highest total against Australia in a dozen years, and a three-wicket blast from Mark Wood tightened the hosts' grip on the third evening as Australia stumbled to 113-4.

That was as good as it got for England, with Labuschagne making 111 and Mitch Marsh batting through what became the final session of the match to keep Australian heads above water.