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FOR INDIA'S FUTURE

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GST MOP-UP CROSSES ₹1.5 LAKH
CR FOR THIRD MONTH IN A ROW

DEHRADUN, FRIDAY JUNE 2, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹2

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BACKS MAN CITY
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11 SPORT

Judicial probe to resolve Manipur violence: Shah

HM emphasises need for dialogue as sole solution to ongoing crisis

PNS ■ IMPHAL

In a significant development aimed at resolving the recent clashes in Manipur, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced on Thursday to set up a judicial probe led by a retired Chief Justice of a High Court. Shah announced this during a Press conference, stressing the imperative need for dialogue as the sole solution to the ongoing crisis.

Furthermore, Shah unveiled plans to establish a peace committee under the leadership of Manipur Governor Anusuiya Uikey. This committee will consist of representatives from all political parties, as well as members from the Kuki and Meitei communities and various social organisations.

Its primary objective is to facilitate constructive discussions and foster peace-building efforts in the region.

During the Press conference, Shah declared, "We will soon announce a judicial probe headed by a retired High Court Chief Justice and set up a



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses a Press conference in Imphal on Thursday PTI

peace committee."

In an additional endeavour to address the situation comprehensively, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) will launch an investigation into multiple FIRs alleging criminal conspiracies behind the violence in Manipur.

Despite the recent outbreaks of violence, Shah expressed optimism regarding the state of affairs, affirming that violence is merely a temporary phase and that misunderstandings will eventually be resolved.

He revealed that he personally visited relief camps, met with representatives from the Kuki and Meitei civil groups, and engaged in discussions pertaining to the peace process. Leaders from both the Meitei and Kuki communities, along with other civil

society representatives, assured Shah of their unwavering commitment to easing tensions and addressing misunderstandings. Shah also disclosed plans to establish an Inter-Agency Unified Command to enhance coordination among various security agencies operating in Manipur. Presently, approximately 10,000 personnel from the Army and Assam rifles have been deployed in the State, in addition to the Central and State police forces.

In response to concerns regarding the Indo-Myanmar border, Shah emphasised the criticality of completing the border fencing between the two countries.

The porous nature of the border has raised apprehensions about drug smuggling and the movement of militants. Additionally, biometric data

of individuals arriving from neighbouring countries is being collected to monitor the influx of refugees from Myanmar.

Addressing the origins of the clashes, Shah clarified that the ethnic riots were triggered by the Manipur High Court's request to the State Government for its opinion on granting Scheduled Tribe status to a particular community.

When questioned about the Kuki community's demand for a separate administrative unit, the Minister refrained from making any sensational statements, reiterating the central government's unwavering commitment to preserving Manipur's territorial integrity. Shah proudly highlighted the accomplishments of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Government in Manipur over the past six years, underscoring that the State has remained free from strikes, curfews, and blockades, experiencing substantial growth and harmony.

Shah assured the public that the Government would soon announce a relief and rehabilitation package. This package aims to provide financial assistance to families who have suffered losses, injuries, or property damage as a result of the violence. The funds will be directly transferred to the bank accounts of the victims and their relatives, serving as a crucial step toward recovery and restoration.

Ties with Nepal 'super hit': Modi Nepal PM hails Modi's 'neighbourhood first policy'

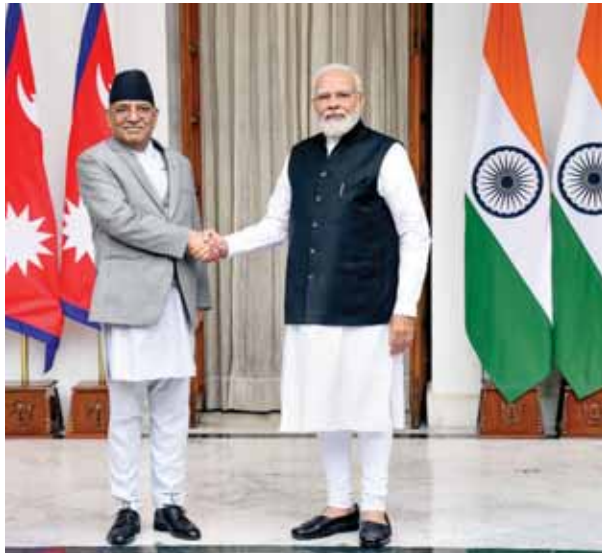
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Nepal on Thursday reviewed their historic bilateral ties during talks here between Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He described the relationship between the two countries a "hit" and said the two sides will strive to take their relationship to "Himalayan heights."

The two Prime Ministers also jointly unveiled the e-plaque of the Kurtha-Bijalpura section of the Railway. Both leaders jointly flagged off the Indian Railway cargo train from Bathnaha in Bihar to Nepal Custom yard.

The two sides also signed seven agreements to boost cooperation in a range of areas, including extension of cross-border petroleum pipeline, development of integrated check posts and boosting cooperation in hydroelectric power. One of the key pacts signed was the revised India-Nepal treaty of transit.

Prachanda arrived here on Wednesday on a four-day visit. It is his first bilateral visit to a foreign country since he



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Nepali counterpart Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' during their joint press statement after a meeting at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Thursday PTI

assumed office in December last year.

The Nepalese PM said he appreciated Modi's "neighbourhood first policy".

In his media statement after the talks, Modi said he and Prachanda took many important decisions to make the partnership between the

two countries a "super hit" in the future. The two leaders remotely inaugurated a number of projects and laid the foundation stone of some others.

"We will continue to strive to take our relationship to Himalayan heights. And in this spirit, we will resolve all issues, be it boundary related or

any other issue," Modi said in the presence of Prachanda.

Modi also referred to his priority in strengthening ties with Nepal after he took charge as Prime Minister nine years back. "I remember, nine years ago, in 2014, within three months of taking office, I made my first visit to Nepal. At that time I had given a 'hit' formula for India-Nepal relations — Highways, I-ways, and Transways," Modi said.

"I had said that we will establish such a relationship between India and Nepal that our borders do not become barriers between us," he said.

Modi said he was feeling proud to say after nine years that "our partnership has been really a 'hit'".

Following the talks, the two leaders virtually inaugurated integrated check posts at Rupaidiha in India and Nepalgunj in Nepal. They also virtually flagged off a cargo train from Bathnaha in Bihar to Nepal custom yard.

To further strengthen cultural and religious ties, "PM Prachanda and I decided that projects related to Ramayana circuit should be expedited," Modi said.

CAPSULE

LAWRENCE BISHNOI GANG 10 SHOOTERS ARRESTED

Gurugram: Ten shooters allegedly associated with gangsters Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldie Brar were arrested here, police said on Thursday. Four pistols, 28 live cartridges, two vehicles and seven police uniforms were seized from their possession, they said, adding one of the vehicles recovered was reportedly stolen from Delhi.

CONG SHOULD CELEBRATE INDIA'S SUCCESS: RIJJU

New Delhi: With India reporting 7.2 per cent growth rate, Union Minister Kiren Rijju on Thursday asked the Congress to celebrate it and not take "sadistic pleasure" by undermining the country's success stories.

TMC'S ABHISHEK LEADS RALLY IN NANDIGRAM

Nandigram: Senior TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee led a 20-km-long march to Nandigram in Purba Medinipur on Thursday, taking the fight for the panchayat elections to the stronghold of Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari who defeated Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in this seat in the 2021 Assembly polls.

All must resolve to fight terror, its financing: EAM at BRICS meet

Jaishankar urges BRICS nations to show sincerity in reforming UNSC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/CAPE TOWN

In a veiled attack on Pakistan, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday described terrorism as the key threat to international peace and security and said all nations must take resolute measures against this menace, including its financing and propaganda. In his opening remarks at the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting here, Jaishankar also said that terrorism must be combated in all its forms and manifestations, and never be condoned under any circumstances.

"Among the key threats to international peace and security is that of terrorism. All nations must take resolute measures against this menace,



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar shake hands with Saudi counterpart Faisal bin Farhan at BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting, in Cape Town on Thursday PTI

including its financing and propaganda," the Minister said at the forum attended by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and South African Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor among others.

Jaishankar has in the past described Pakistan as the "epi-centre of terrorism" where terrorists like Hafiz Saeed, Masood Azhar, Sajid Mir and Dawood Ibrahim are sheltered.

He also called on BRICS nations to demonstrate their

sincerity in reforming multilateral institutions, including that of the UN Security Council. "For two decades, we have heard calls for reform of multilateral institutions, only to be continuously disappointed. It is, therefore, imperative that BRICS members demonstrate sincerity in regard to reforming global decision-making, including that of the UN Security Council," he said in his opening remarks at the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting here.

IAF aircraft crashes in K'taka field, pilots hurt



PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/CHAMARAJANAGAR (KARNATAKA)

A Kiran trainer aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) on Thursday crashed in an open field at a village in Chamarajanagar district of Karnataka. The two pilots, including a woman, managed to eject safely from the plane before the mishap. A mandatory court of inquiry was initiated by the IAF to find out the cause of the crash.

The training aircraft, which took off from the air force station in Bengaluru, crashed in the morning at Bhogapura village. It was good fortune that aircraft hit the ground on barren land and not in the nearby village, a villager said.

District officials said the pilots, identified only as Tejpal and Bhumika, sustained minor injuries. No casualties were reported. According to the IAF, the pilots were on a routine training sortie when the incident occurred. A court of inquiry has been ordered to ascertain the cause of accident.



Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait addresses a Khap 'Mahapanchayat' organised over the ongoing protest by wrestlers against WFI President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, at Soram village, in Muzaffarnagar on Thursday PTI

prevent any untoward incident, Delhi Police officials said.

Led by farmer leader Rakesh Tikait, the mahapanchayat was convened by Bhartiya Kisan Union leader Naresh Tikait, a day

after they successfully dissuaded several prominent wrestlers from discarding their hard-earned medals into the Ganga river as a mark of protest against the alleged inaction of the police regarding the accused.

Delhi excise case: Hyd trader turns approver; pardoned

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court on Thursday allowed Hyderabad businessman P Sarath Chandra Reddy, accused in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise policy scam, to turn approver.

Special Judge MK Nagpal allowed his prayer and granted pardon to Reddy on an application moved by him. Special Judge Nagpal passed this order on May 29. Former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia is also an accused in the case.

The development may compound the legal woes of other accused in the politically sensitive case for both Sisodia and the AAP, which is only regional political outfit that runs the Governments in Delhi and Punjab.

The court made the decision on an application moved by Reddy, who in his application said, "I am ready to make true disclosure voluntarily about the case and want to be an approver in the case."

Reddy was recently granted bail by the Delhi High



Court on medical grounds.

According to the Enforcement Directorate (ED), Reddy is the head of Hyderabad-based company Aurobindo Pharma, and was also engaged in liquor business.

Reddy had in the past accused the ED of putting undue pressure and using force on witnesses to sign "pre-dictated" statements. However, in the course of investigation, he had later said the allegations were "baseless".

The CBI and the ED have alleged that irregularities were committed while modifying the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22, undue favours were extended to licence holders, licence fee was waived or reduced and L-1 licence was extended without the competent authority's approval.

Democracy no more in NCERT Class X book

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Chemistry textbook, which includes a quote by American chemist Glenn T Seaborg stating that the Periodic Table is the most important concept in chemistry.

The NCERT justified the changes by stating that reducing content load on students is crucial in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The National Education Policy 2020 also emphasises the need to decrease content load and promote experiential learning.

AAP gets DMK support on ordinance row

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Thursday accused the Centre of creating a crisis in the non-BJP ruled States and said the ruling DMK would strongly oppose the Central ordinance on control over administrative services in the national Capital.

"The Centre is creating a crisis to the Aam Aadmi Party and is preventing a duly elected Government from functioning independently.

Despite the Supreme Court verdict in favour of the AAP Government, the Centre brought the ordinance.

The DMK will strongly oppose it," Stalin, who is president of the DMK, told reporters outside his Alwarpet residence here.

Flanked by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, addresses the media after their meeting at his residence in Chennai on Thursday PTI

Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann, Stalin described Kejriwal as his "good friend" and said the discussion between them on opposing the ordinance was fruitful.

"The Chief Ministers in the non-BJP ruled States and also the political party leaders

should extend their support in opposing the ordinance," Stalin urged.

"This sort of healthy discussion among the Opposition parties should continue to protect the democracy in the country," he added.

Accusing the BJP-led

Government of bringing the ordinance nullifying the Supreme Court order, Kejriwal, who air-dashed to Chennai and sought Stalin's support, said the DMK agreed to strongly oppose it and stand by AAP Government and the people of Delhi.

"This ordinance should be collectively defeated in the Parliament as it is undemocratic, against the federal structure and unconstitutional," he said and termed the coming together of opposition parties to defeat the ordinance as semi-finals to the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

Mann said the DMK Government had to put up a fight against a Governor who not only refrained from passing the Assembly bills but also did not read out the speech prepared by the State Government.

GUEST COLUMN

Methane is burning the future of life



Vir Singh

If the human-caused climate change on our only known living planet continues unabatedly, then the integrity of life will soon start breaking down. In the Anthropocene, the sixth mass extinction of species is also going on and it is estimated that by the end of this century, about half of the species on earth will haplessly go extinct. If the global warming-led climate change persists like this, this fateful epoch in the evolutionary history of planet is likely to turn the planet into a fireball in three-four centuries bringing the story of life assume its “The End”. Human activity in the back, climate change in the front! February this year marked the warmest month in known climate history on Earth, and the months ahead are set to create unique heat stories, signs of which have started pouring in. Meanwhile, in addition to the unabated increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, climate experts are eyeing yet another causal agent of global warming. That’s methane. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recently reported that 2022 witnessed the fourth highest annual increase in methane emissions to the atmosphere,

which is part of the overall increase in greenhouse gases.

Although carbon dioxide has largely been the focus of global warming, scientists are more concerned about methane in particular after the Glasgow Climate Agreement. This is also because methane is capable of imparting 87 times more warming effect than carbon dioxide on a 20-year scale. So when scientists are calling for a 45 per cent reduction in carbon emissions over a decade, controlling methane emissions appears to be one of the best options. Major sources of methane emissions include oil wells, natural gas leaks, landfills, livestock, manure ponds, swamps, and waterlogged rice fields. In fact, wherever there is a lack of oxygen in the process of decomposition of organic matter followed by the proliferation of microorganisms in this process, the emission of carbon is less in the form of carbon dioxide and more in the form of methane. Properly managed, methane is a useful fuel gas, but its increasing concentration in the atmosphere is burning the future of life on Earth. It is very important to slow down the methane formation process in nature’s carbon cycle for controlling the climate change process. NOAA administrator Rick Spinrod said in a report: “Observations collected by NOAA scientists in the year 2022 show that greenhouse gas emissions are increasing at an alarming rate and will remain in the atmosphere for thousands of years. It is time to stop greenhouse gas pollution to control and reduce man-made emissions as we move towards a climate-friendly world.” Methane is projected to increase by 14 parts per billion to 1,911.9 ppb (parts per billion) in 2022.

It was increased by 15.20 ppb in the year 2020 and 17.75 ppb in 2021. “More than 50 percent methane emissions are coming from human activities, such as oil and gas extraction, agriculture, waste management, and landfills,” says Benjamin Poulter, a scientist working at NASA.

The exact amount of methane produced by human activity and natural sources over the years is not known, but scientists say ecosystems begin to emit more methane due to warming. Schindel, a former NASA climate scientist and professor at Duke University, said, “If the rapid increase in methane emissions is being caused by wetlands and natural systems, that’s very scary because there’s not much we can do to stop it.” If methane leaks from fossil fuel fields, we can make rules. But we can’t make rules about what swamps do.”

Preliminary data from NOAA shows the average ocean temperature since early April at 21.1 degrees Celsius, only slightly higher than the previous high of 21 degrees in 2016. New data show that 2022 is on track to be the fifth warmest year since weather records began. The year 2023 is, however, likely to be even hotter, as a climate phenomenon called La Niña – which has a cooling effect on global temperatures – kicks off. Between the years 2020 and 2022, three consecutive La Niña episodes occurred in the Northern Hemisphere. In spite of the La Niña triple, the European Union’s climate monitoring service states that the year 2022 was set to be the fifth warmest year on record. Global average temperatures over the past three years have been near record levels, but would have been even

higher without the cooling effect of prolonged La Niña. This year, the opposite of La Niña is expected to be an El Niño pattern that could increase the risk of extreme weather conditions and further challenge global heat records. A mere 0.2 oC temperature rise, as likely due to El Niño patterns, would add about 20 per cent to the current global temperature increase from climate change. NOAA senior scientist Mike McFadden agreed that “the prolonged La Niña was driving down global average surface temperatures even as greenhouse gases in the atmosphere increased. Now that it is out, we are likely to see the climate change signal coming through loud and clear.” The NOAA report states that carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide with a warming effect of 285 times more have also recorded a significant increase in 2022. Carbon dioxide levels are projected to rise to 417.06 ppm (parts per million) in 2022, which is 50 percent more than pre-industrial levels. Nitrous oxide, which according to NOAA is the third most important greenhouse gas emitted by human activities, has increased to 335.7 ppb, mainly due to the indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers in the agriculture sector. Minimizing dependence on fossil fuels and reducing the number of ruminants are certainly suitable ways to reduce methane in the atmosphere and limit warming. The International Energy Agency estimates that by 2022 methane emissions could be reduced by up to 70 percent with current technology.

(The author is professor emeritus, environmental science, GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology. Views expressed are personal)

Anti-encroachment drive continues in various parts of Doon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The authorities continued the anti-encroachment drive in different areas of Dehradun city on Thursday. The drive was conducted by five teams comprising personnel of the Municipal Corporation of Dehradun, Regional Transport Office and the police. The drive on Thursday was conducted from Chandernagar Road to Saharanpur Chowk via Prince Chowk, Araghia to Doon University road via Ajabpur Kalan, Balli-

wala Chowk to Saharanpur junction, Vidhan Sabha to Mohkamur and Brahmakamal Chowk to Canal Road. According to official sources, on Thursday the police issued 32 challans amounting to Rs 16,000, the MCD issued 58 challans amounting to Rs 49,800 while the RTO issued 49 challans amounting to Rs 49,000. From April 17 when the anti-encroachment drive began to June 1, the authorities have issued challans

amounting to Rs 56,96,917. The authorities have issued a total of 4,726 challans which include 1,908 by the MCD, 1,592 by the RTO and 1,220 by the police. It is pertinent to mention here that encroachments on public space are one of the major reasons for traffic congestion and other civic issues in the provisional State capital. Apart from helping resolve traffic congestion and improving civic facilitation, the removal of encroach-

ments is also expected to alleviate the water logging problem often encountered in the city during the monsoon.

Police arrest duo including minor for stealing motorbikes

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Haridwar police arrested two members of a gang- including a minor, who have been allegedly stealing motorbikes in several areas of the district late on Wednesday. The police also recovered eight stolen motorbikes from the possession of the two accused, said the senior superintendent of police of Haridwar, Ajai Singh. He said that several police stations received complaints of theft of two-wheelers from various areas of the district in the past few weeks. He said that a citizen recently filed a complaint in the Ranipur police station stating that his bike was stolen too considering which, the police started checking vehicles in the area on May 31.

During checking near Regulator bridge, the police found two accused including a minor and a Saharanpur resident Bittu with two stolen bikes, informed the SSP. He said that the accused revealed during the investigation that they are drug addicts and steal vehicles to get quick money to buy illegal drugs.

They also revealed to the police that they have accomplices who also steal vehicles across the district, claimed Singh. He said

that the accused also told the police about the location of six more stolen bikes which have been recovered too. He said that the police are investigating the matter to gather more evidence in the case to nab the other gang members too soon. The recovered motorbikes will also be handed over to their respective owners after completion of the required procedure by the police, added Singh.




NORTHERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. 18/Sr.DMM/MB/2023 Dated: 30.04.2023

Invitation of Tender through E-Procurement System
Senior Divisional Materials Manager, Northern Railway, Moradabad-244001 for and behalf of the President of India. Invites tenders through e-procurement system for the supply of the below item:-

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Description	Qty.	Earnest Money in Rs.	Estimated Value in Rs.	Due date
01	97235216	Ultrasound Machine with Doppler	1 Nos.	90,000/-	45,00,000/-	28.06.2023

Note:- Above tender with detailed description are uploaded on IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in. The firm who desires to participate against E-Tender are advised to electronically register themselves on the above website for which they would require to have a class III digital signature certificate from certifying agencies authorized under IT Act 2000 by Govt. of India. Manual offers against E-Tender shall not be accepted.

Serving Customers with a Smile



NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE

No. 74-W/2/3/WA/Publication
SR.DEN/C/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against following tenders closing date 27/06/2023 16:00. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

DATED: 01/06/2023

Tender No. Date	77-DRM-MB-23-24 31.05.2023	78-DRM-MB-23-24 31.05.2023	79-DRM-MB-23-24 31.05.2023	80-DRM-MB-23-24 31.05.2023	81-DRM-MB-23-24 31.05.2023
Name of work	Misc. P.way work in connection with EI at RKSH station in the jurisdiction of DEN/IMB.	Through bridge channel sleeper renewal by H-Beam sleeper 994 nos. (Br. No. 1260 DN – 72 Nos, 1260 UP – 72 Nos, 1268 DN – 174 Nos, 1268 UP – 174 Nos, 1275 DN – 45 Nos, 1275 UP – 45 Nos, 1282 DN – 46 Nos, 1282 UP – 46 Nos, 1289 DN – 66 Nos, 1289 UP – 66 Nos, 1294 UP – 47 Nos, 1298 UP – 23 Nos, 1300 DN – 3 Nos, 1300 UP – 92 Nos and 1306 UP – 23 Nos) in the section of ADEN/RK under DEN-IMB.	Improvement of dilapidated swimming pool in Sr.Girl's School and Sr.Boy's School of Oak Grove School in the section of SSEW/DDN under ADEN/HW.	Replacement of rail cluster of existing bridge no. 116 by RSC slab on LRJ-DDN section under ADE/HW.	Pre and Post attention work in connection with tamping by tamping machine in the section of DEN/IMB.
Tender Closing Date Time	27.06.2023 16:00	27.06.2023 16:00	27.06.2023 16:00	27.06.2023 16:00	27.06.2023 16:00
Advertised Value (Rs.)	5472913.45	33455984.72	8465686.24	1482545.99	14783857.40
Earnest Money (Rs.)	109500.00	317300.00	169300.00	29700.00	223900.00
Bidding Start Date	13.06.2023	13.06.2023	13.06.2023	13.06.2023	13.06.2023
Validity of Offer (Days)	60 Days	60 Days	60 Days	60 Days	60 Days
Period of Completion	9 Months	9 Months	6 months	6 months	12 Months

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Thunderstorms with lightning & gusty winds likely in six districts today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The rainy weather is expected to continue for the rest of this week in the State. The maximum temperatures in Dehradun and other places have dropped by four to six degrees Celsius and are expected to remain below the normal due to the changed weather. The State meteorological centre has issued a yellow warning (watch) regarding the possibility of thunderstorms accompanied with lightning and gusty wind (30-40 kmph) likely to occur at isolated places in Uttarkashi, Rudraprayag, Chamoli, Bageshwar, Pithoragarh, Almora districts on Friday. Further, light to moderate rain/thunderstorm/snowfall is likely to occur at a few places in Uttarkashi, Rudraprayag, Chamoli, Bageshwar, Pithoragarh and Almora districts and at isolated places in remaining mountainous districts of the State. Apart from this, dry weather is likely to prevail in the plains of the State today. The provisional State capital Dehradun is forecast to witness mainly clear to partly cloudy skies with thunder cloud development likely to occur in some

areas. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be about 33 degrees Celsius and 20 degrees Celsius respectively today. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in various parts of the State on Thursday were 31.9 degrees Celsius and 18.2 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 34 degrees Celsius and 20.9 degrees Celsius in

Pantnagar, 22.1 degrees Celsius and 11.7 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 23.5 degrees Celsius and 11.5 degrees Celsius respectively in New Tehri. Light to moderate rain was witnessed in some areas with 19.5 millimetres in Syamsi, six millimetres each in Betalghat and Karnprayag, five millimetres in Dunda and 3.5 millimetres in Uttarkashi.

‘Tree Man’ Saklani’s 101st birth anniversary to be celebrated today

VINOD CHAMOLI ■ NEW TEHRI

Wishweshwar Dutt Saklani, the “Tree Man” (Vrisksh Manav) who grew lakhs of trees in the mountains and is credited for having grown forests on many hectares of land, will be remembered today on his 101st birth anniversary with tree plantation and related activities. Saklani was born on June 2, 1922 in Pujar village of Tehri district. He started planting trees at the age of eight years. As he grew in age, his work of planting trees also continued to progress. Saklani and his elder brother Nagendra Saklani had also participated actively in the national freedom struggle. He was also jailed on many occasions. Nagendra Saklani was martyred during the freedom struggle. His wife also died in 1956. These incidents further increased his attachment to trees which became his main purpose in life. Shoulder bag and spade in hand, he got engrossed in sowing the seeds of oak, deodar and broad-leaf species. He died aged 96 years in 2019. His son Santosh Saklani says that more than 50 lakh trees were planted on about 1,200 hectares in the Saklana Patti area. These trees include oak, kafal and deodar. An event will be held today in the village to mark his 101st birth anniversary and to inspire the younger generation.



SMFG
Grihashakti

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(FORMERLY FULLERTON INDIA HOME FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED)
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SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES
E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE OF 15 DAYS FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE ASSETS UNDER THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 READ WITH PROVISION TO RULE 9(1) OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the Public in General and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below listed immovable properties ("Secured Assets") mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Possession of which has been taken by the **Authorized Officer of SMFG India Home Finance Company Limited (Formerly Fullerton India Home Finance Company Limited) ("Secured Creditor")**, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" on the date and time mentioned herein below, for recovery of the dues mentioned herein below and further interest and other expenses thereon till date of realization, due to **SMFG India Home Finance Company Limited (Formerly Fullerton India Home Finance Company Limited)**/Secured Creditor from the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) mentioned herein below. The Reserve Price, Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and Last Date of EMD deposit is also mentioned herein below :

1) Date & Time of E-Auction: 17.06.2023 at 11.00 AM to 01.00 PM (with unlimited extensions of 5 minute each)	2) Last Date & Time of Submission of Request Letter of Participate/KYC Documents/Proof of EMD, etc. : 16.06.2023		
Sl. No.	Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s) LAN	Demand Notice Date & Amount	Description of the Properties
01	LAN NO. 611607510568010 (1) VYAS CHANDER, S/o SUBE SINGH, (2) SUNITA DEVI, W/o VYASH CHANDER Add. 1: R/o 211 SELAQUI RURAL, NEAR BHAGYARITH RESORT SELAQUI, DEHRADUN - 248001.	Date : 23.06.2022 Rs. 20,75,471.51 (Rupees Twenty Lakh Seventy Five Thousand Four Hundred Seventy One and Fifty One Paisa only) due as on 22.06.2022	All picee and parcel property bearing : All that plot forming part of land bearing Khata No. 752 (fasi 1399 to 1404) Kharsa No. 878/7 min area measuring 255 sq. yards or say 213.28 Sq. Metrs., Situated at Mauza Central Hope Town, Pargana Pachhwa Doon Tehsil Vikasnagar, Distt Dehradun, Bounded as under : East : 2o ft., Wide passage side 30 ft. West : Land of other side measuring 30 ft. North : Land of shri varnit garg side measuring 78 ft. South : 20 ft. Wide road side 75 ft.
Reserve Price : Rs. 27,00,000/- (Rupees Twenty Seven Lakh only)		Earnest Money Deposit : Rs. 2,70,000/- (Rupees Two Lakh Seventy Thousand only)	Bid Incremental Value : Rs. 27,000/- (Rupees Twenty Seven Thousand only)

Details terms and conditions of the sale are as below and the details are also provided in our/secured creditor's website at the following link/website address (<https://disposallhub.com> and <https://www.grihashakti.com/pdf/E-Auction.pdf>). The Intending Bidders can also contact Mr. Manoj Brar, on his Mob. No. 8588839856, E-mail : manoj.brar@grihashakti.com and Mr. Mahesh Bangera, on his Mob. No. 8655605063, E-mail : mahesh.bangera@grihashakti.com

Place : Uttarakhand
Date : 02.06.2023

Authorized Officer
SMFG INDIA HOME FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED
(Formerly Fullerton India Home Finance Company Limited)



ICICI Bank

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

Whereas
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.
As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Digvijay Pant/ Komal Pant/ LBAGR00004085999	Fiat No. C-1008, 10th Floor, Anthela, Pocket-B, Sector 12D, Awaz Vikas, Sikandra Yojna, Agra, Uttar Pradesh Agra 282002/ May 31, 2023	December 31, 2022 Rs. 8,17,755/-	Agra/ Almora

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

Date : June 02, 2023
Place : Almora

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is informed that I have changed my Son's name from ANTAJOT SINGH to ANTAJOT SINGH NAGPAL and in future he should be known as ANTAJOT SINGH NAGPAL S/o Daljeet singh Nagpal address: Om City Block C, Kargi Road Pathri Bagh Chowk

I Simi Akhtar Adhar Card No 6072 87876461 declares that I am using Simi Sarwar in some documents of School/College. Therefore both the SIMI AKHTAR & SIMI SARWAR are same person. SIMI Akhtar W/o MOHAMMAD SARWAR KHAN BARA BHARUWALA OPP church clementown DehraDun.

CHANGE OF NAME
In my husband's Service records my name is entered wrongly as **SANJU** whereas my actual name is **SANJU SHARMA**. In future it would be read as above for all purposes. **Smt. Sanju Sharma W/o Mr. Arun Kumar Vill. Bhangeri Mahavatpur, Milap Nagar, Bhangeri Mahavatpur (Ahat), Haridwar-UK.** vide affidavit sworn to before me Sita Ram Nautiyal Advocate & Notary dated 12.05.2023

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PM Modi requested to inaugurate global investors summit in Uttarakhand

Roadshows and other events planned as part of event to be held in Nov-Dec

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has requested the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inaugurate the global investors summit slated to be hosted by Uttarakhand in November/December this year.

The State government has a good opportunity to increase investment opportunities through the global investors summit. Along with a good environment for establishing

panding in the State is also attracting those in the industrial world to come to Uttarakhand.

According to the officials, two international level road shows and six national level road shows are proposed to be held as part of the global investors summit. In addition to these, mini conclaves are also proposed in Mussoorie and Ramnagar. Road shows and other programmes will be held to attract investment in tourism, industry, information technology, health, higher education and other sectors as part of this investors summit.

Additional chief secretary Radha Raturi, secretaries Meenakshi Sundaram, Vinay Shankar Pandey, SIIDCUL managing director Rohit Meena and other officials concerned were also present in the meeting.



ment of industries, the State also has better human resources. The government has made a new strong industrial policy to maximise the number of investors coming to the State. Dhami further said that the speed at which air, rail and road connectivity are ex-

The chief minister said that there are varied opportunities

More than 19 lakh visit Char Dham shrines so far

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The rain and snowfall experienced in the higher reaches of the State in the recent past failed to deter the enthusiasm of the multitudes undertaking the Char Dham Yatra. More than 19 lakh persons have visited the Char

tarkashi district so far. Apart from this, 18,577 people have visited the Hemkund Sahib Gurudwara. Official records show that 5,42,498 persons have visited Badrinath so far while 6,69,310 have visited Kedarnath, 3,77,373 have vis-

provided emergency medical services to 11,328 persons undertaking the Char Dham Yatra. Further, a total of 14,713 persons have given an undertaking to the authorities before going ahead on the pilgrimage while 45 have been



Dham shrines since the pilgrimage began in the last week of April. According to official data provided on Thursday, 19,32,681 persons have visited the Char Dham shrines of Badrinath in Chamoli district, Kedarnath in Rudrapur district, and the Gangotri and Yamunotri shrines in Ut-

ited Gangotri and 3,43,500 have visited Yamunotri so far. On Thursday, 18,065 persons visited Badrinath, 22,801 visited Kedarnath, 7,897 visited Gangotri, 9,735 visited Yamunotri and 1,503 visited the Hemkund Sahib Gurudwara.

The government has so far

sent back due to health reasons. It is pertinent to mention here that unseasonal rain and snowfall in the higher reaches had temporarily affected the Char Dham Yatra but it has continued despite the inclement weather experienced in the recent past.

Two dead, four injured in truck-jeep collision on Badrinath highway

PNS ■ NEW TEHRI

Two persons died when the jeep they were travelling in had a collision with a truck near Teendhara on the Rishikesh-Badrinath national highway on Thursday. Four persons injured in the mishap were taken by ambulance to the community health centre in Devprayag. Those who died have been identified as

other men were going by jeep from Pilibhit to Srinagar for work when the mishap occurred. All the injured were taken to the community health centre where two of them died during treatment. The bodies were sent to the base hospital in Srinagar for post mortem examination while the remaining injured



Ramesh (40) and Sohan Singh Pundir (28). They along with

men are undergoing treatment.

Valley of Flowers reopened for visitors

PNS ■ JOSHIMATH

The Valley of Flowers national park in Chamoli district was reopened to the public on Thursday. About



40 tourists visited the national park on the first day of its reopening. Situated at an altitude of about 13,000 feet, the Valley of Flowers has more than 500 species of flowers in addition to fauna.

PAC jawan allegedly shoots himself, police suspect it to be accidental death

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A Provincial Armed Constabulary jawan named Pramod Rawat, who was posted in the security of chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, allegedly shot himself with his service weapon on Thursday. However, the police claimed that it is yet to be decided whether it is suicide or an accidental death.

The deceased allegedly shot himself with a rifle AK47 in the afternoon in a barrack between the CM's residence and Raj Bhawan. Several senior police officers including the inspector general of the Garhwal range, Karan Singh Nagyal, Dehradun SSP Daleep Singh Kunwar and SP (City) Sarita Dobhal among others reached the spot after getting information about the incident. The additional director general of police (Administration) Abhinav Kumar who also visited the spot said that besides suicide, it is also possible that the deceased accidentally shot himself when he was probably cleaning his rifle.

It was also being suspected by many that the deceased Rawat had asked for leave to

attend a religious function at his home and after it did not get approved, he allegedly committed suicide. However, Kumar refuted these allegations and added that the deceased had asked for leave from June 16 which is still several days away and it is very unlikely that he committed suicide due to this reason. He said that the police are talking to his friends, colleagues and family members who also visited him here recently. The police are also checking his mobile phone to gather important details.

He said that he has also received information that the deceased and his family were also well settled financially and it is very unlikely he committed suicide because of financial reasons. He said that the police have sent the body for post mortem examination and police can reach a conclusion only after getting reports of post mortem and forensic tests. SSP Kunwar also said that it appears that the deceased might have accidentally shot himself but police are investigating the matter to find out the truth.

Transport Dept not to impose penalty immediately for failure to install VLTD

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Transport department will not start imposing penalties on those vehicle operators for now who are yet to install vehicle location tracking devices (VLTDs). Thousands of pilgrims are arriving in the State daily and using services of commercial vehicles to visit Char Dham shrines and the department does not want to create panic at this stage among pilgrims as well as vehicle operators, said the regional transport officer (administration) of Dehradun division Sunil Sharma. He told 'The Pioneer' that the department had directed the vehicle operators on April 13 to install VLTDs by May 31 that help in tracking the movement of the vehicles, ensure passengers' safety as well help provide immediate help in case of accidents. He said that all new vehicles bought after the year 2019 came with installed VLTD so all vehicles bought before 2019 were directed to mandatorily install the device. He said, "The department last year issued nearly 20,305 green cards to vehicle operators to operate on Char Dham routes but this year, we have already issued about 21,000 green cards. The number is expected to increase in the next few weeks. Considering such conditions, we have decided not to start imposing penalties on vehicle operators for now."

He said, "Many operators are installing the devices but to ensure others do it too without creating panic at the present time, the transport department will check the status of installation of VLTDs before issuing green cards to vehicle operators interested to

operate on Char Dham routes. The officials concerned will let them know the advantages of VLTD installation and ask them if they are facing any issue in the installation or have any objection regarding the installation to provide the necessary help."

BJP pursuing 1.25 lakh missed call target for support in each LS constituency

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party is pursuing a target of 1.25 lakh missed calls to garner support in each of the five Lok Sabha constituencies in Uttarakhand as part of its Maha Sampark Abhiyan. Holding a virtual meeting, the party's national general secretary and the campaign's national convener Tarun Chugh said that interactions will be held with 1,000 special personalities at the Lok Sabha level to seek support. Later, a letter thanking them will be sent from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The information and photographs of these persons will also be uploaded on the BJP's Saral application, he said.

Stating that the door to door contact is the most important part of this cam-

paign, Chugh said that party workers will visit 1.25 lakh families in every Lok Sabha constituency and ask the head of the family to make a missed call. Union ministers, chief minister,

to treat organisational tasks in the campaign with priority. The MPs and MLAs of the area concerned will have to present information about their public welfare works through the media and social media, he said. The campaign's State in-charge Ashwini Tyagi asked all the office bearers to soon prepare a list of special personalities, senior workers, members of the business community and beneficiaries of government schemes.



the BJP State president, MPs, MLAs and senior office bearers of the party will also contribute their bit to their campaign.

The BJP State in-charge and national general secretary Dushyant Kumar Gautam exhorted all the MLAs and public representatives

BJP State president Mahendra Bhatt said that the party has to organise rallies which are attended by the maximum number of people so far in every Lok Sabha constituency. The MPs, MLAs and the organisation have to work in a co-ordinated manner to achieve this.

Police to issue 100 per cent traffic challans digitally

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Traffic police of Dehradun is currently issuing about 95 per cent of challans for traffic violations digitally and working to make it 100 per cent in the next few months, said the traffic superintendent of police Akshay Konde. He said that the traffic police personnel are now hardly using challan booklets to impose fines except in the rural areas where cameras are not installed yet. "I have almost

stopped issuing the challan book because most challans are being issued via digital mode using integrated cameras. Over 100 such cameras are installed in Dehradun that assess the data and issue challan accordingly," said the SP. He said that traffic police also used cameras last month to issue over 200 e-challans to public transport vehicles like auto rickshaws, Vikrams and city buses for traffic violations. He said

that the traffic police are also using drones frequently to monitor traffic and proper parking. "We have issued nearly 2,500 challans using drones in the past three months. These drones are mostly operated in the five kilometres radius of the traffic police office in Dehradun that covers several crowded locations where traffic violations occur on a daily basis," said Konde.

वर्ष उत्कर्ष के

A FESTIVAL OF CULTURES, AN EXHIBITION OF INDIA'S JOURNEY OF DEVELOPMENT

30th May to 3rd June, 2023, **Place:** Sanatan Dharm Inter College (Bannu) Racecourse, Dehradun - 248001 (Uttarakhand)

Digital Exhibition – 11 am onwards and Musical Evening – 7 pm onwards

Today's (2st June) Main Attraction

Pritam Bhartwan

Kalpana Chauhan

• Mesmerising performances of Uttarakhand's famous artistes • Musical bands • Laser shows and live show • Art and craft mela • Local music and dance programme • Local cuisines

Exhibition of Government Schemes (State and Central) and Public Utility Services

You all are cordially invited on this occasion

Co-sponsor: Mussoorie Dehradun Development Authority

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Centre’s panel refuses to keep Cheetahs fenced in

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rajesh Gopal, the head of the Centre's high-level committee set up to monitor the cheetah reintroduction project and country's top tiger expert on Thursday dismissed the South Africa and Namibia suggestions that the imported predators should be kept in a fenced habitat to save them from poaching and minimize human-animal conflict. He said that it is against India's basic tenets of wildlife conservation.

"India does not want fenced habitats for cheetahs like the ones in South Africa and Namibia as it is against the basic tenets of wildlife conservation," he said amid flak the Government has been drawing following death of three predators that were brought to India from Africa for Project Cheetah in Madhya Pradesh's Kuno Palpur Sanctuary over the past couple of months.

Over the last week, three cubs too have died.

He echoed views of many wildlife experts in the country that fences can disrupt natural animal movements and impede genetic exchange between populations.

"We have our own socio-cultural issues. We have been handling tigers for the last 50 years and we know what the human-wildlife interface is. We can handle cheetahs too," Gopal said, adding that seven more cheetahs, including two females, will be released into the wild by the third week of June.

The Union Ministry has already made clear that the cheetahs will be allowed to move out of KNP and will not necessarily be "recaptured unless they venture into areas where they are in significant danger". All the predators are fitted with satellite collars.

Experts from South Africa and Namibia, who are helping reintroduce cheetahs in India, have recommended fencing their habitats to prevent poaching, habitat fragmentation and minimise human-animal conflict. However, experts in India say fences can disrupt natural animal movements and impede genetic exchange between populations.

"It's absolutely bogus to think of fencing the habitats. It goes against the basic tenets of wildlife conservation. What happened in a fenced park there (in Africa) will not happen here. Our understanding is that regional networks of protected areas should merge into a national network of protected areas so that there is porosity for wildlife gene flow," said Gopal, chairman of the 11-member cheetah steering committee.

"We have our own socio-cultural issues. We have been handling tigers for



the last 50 years and we know what the human-wildlife interface is. We can han-

dle cheetahs too," he said, adding that seven more cheetahs, including two females, will be released into the wild by the third week of June.

South African wildlife expert Vincent van der Merwe, who is closely involved with the project, had earlier said, "There has never been a successful reintroduction (of cheetahs) into an unfenced reserve in recorded history. It has been attempted 15 times in Africa and it failed every time.

"We are not advocating that India must fence all of its cheetah reserves, we are saying that just fence two or three and create source reserves to top up sink reserves."

Source reserves are habitats that provide optimal conditions for reproduction of a particular species. These areas have abundant resources and favourable environmental conditions. They can support self-sustaining populations that produce a surplus of individuals, which can then dis-

perse to other areas.

Sink reserves, on the other hand, are habitats that have limited resources or environmental conditions that are less favourable for the survival or reproduction of a species. Sink reserves rely on dispersing individuals from source reserves to maintain their population numbers.

Officials said the Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh, is being prepared as an alternative habitat for cheetahs by November.

To address the issue of cheetah-people interface, Gopal said a GIS-based landscape fragmentation analysis will be conducted to help the state authorities identify vulnerable areas.

"We cannot say the cheetahs will spend their entire lives in Kuno. They will enter human settlements and there will be some issues. We have to foresee and be ready for it," he said.



Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar greets Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' during a meeting, in New Delhi on Thursday

PTI

ED grills J'khand Cong MLA Pradeep Yadav in money laundering case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday interrogated Jharkhand Congress MLA Pradeep Yadav as part of its investigation into a money laundering case.

On Tuesday, the agency had conducted searches at a dozen locations in Jharkhand linked to Yadav, a five-time legislator from the Poraiyahat seat and deputy leader of the Congress in the Assembly, officials said.

After the questioning on Wednesday, the MLA said he will soon approach the court over the ED action. He claimed the ED found nothing objectionable in its raids so far.

Yadav alleged that the BJP was using Central agencies to target the Opposition leaders.

Fifty-seven-year-old Yadav and another MLA's premises were searched by the Income Tax Department last year as part of a tax evasion probe against some business groups engaged in coal trading and transportation, extraction of iron ore and production of sponge iron in Jharkhand.

The money laundering investigation is based on this tax evasion case as the violation of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act is a predicate offence.

PM SVANidhi seeing fastest rollout, says Hardeep Puri

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Thursday said the PM SVANidhi scheme, launched to help street vendors get easy loans, is witnessing one of the fastest roll-outs among all Government schemes.

The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister was speaking at an event on the completion of three years of the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi, also known as PM SVANidhi.

According to a statement, the minister at the event said the PM SVANidhi has led to an unparalleled wave of financial inclusion and digital literacy in the countries cities and small towns. The scheme, launched on June 1, 2020, with an aim to instil 'Swarozgar, Svavlamban, Swabhimaan' (Self Employment, Self-Sustenance, and Self-Confidence) in street vendors has become one of the fastest growing microcredit schemes of the central government and has given people access to credit and social security schemes, the statement said.

Puri on Thursday also launched a PM SVANidhi mobile app to ease the loan application process for street vendors. He also interacted with the beneficiaries of the scheme.

NCPCR launches drug, tobacco-free India drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Welcoming the Centre's move of bringing tobacco regulation on OTT (over-the-top) platforms which have seen nearly 100% increase in viewership on kids' content during the pandemic, health experts and child rights activists led by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) feel that proposed amendments to the COTPA Act is an urgent necessity in creating a tobacco-free environment for impressionable minds.

On its part, the NCPCR launched a nationwide campaign "Addiction Free Amrit Kaal", an initiative aimed at promoting a tobacco and drug-free India with the help of children. The children rights body Chairperson Priyank Kanoongo said that under this unique drive, children, who are the most affected by indirect tobacco use, have been made members of 'Prahari Clubs' established in schools. They will serve as the government's eyes and ears, sharing information if any tobacco-selling shops exist near their schools,



he said. Highlighting the link between tobacco products and drug addiction, Kanoongo noted that the entertainment industry plays a significant role in enticing children into tobacco use. While there are rules requiring warnings on tobacco product scenes in films, there was a pressing need for regulations regarding OTT platforms which have gained popularity in recent times and were being misused, he said, informing that the NCPCR had been seeking regulation of tobacco use on OTT platforms.

At the same time, he battled for a robust Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), which, he said, can serve as an important tool in curbing tobacco use, especially among children. "This legislation encompasses stringent

measures to restrict all forms of tobacco advertising at the point of sale and put an end to the practice of designated smoking zones in public places. These smoking zones pose significant harm to children who are exposed to tobacco smoke in these areas," Kanoongo said during the event organised in technical partnership with Tobacco Free India, a citizens' group..

Dr Uma Kumar, Head of Rheumatology at AIIMS, Delhi, highlighted the health risks associated with drug and tobacco addiction as over 13 lakh people succumb to the toxic product. "The COTPA Amendment Bill will not only save lives but also reduce the burden on the healthcare system, she added. Dr Jagdish Kaur, regional advisor, Tobacco Free Initiative, WHO echoed the same views as she gave insight into the global perspective on addiction prevention and control. She warned that as people are becoming more aware about the tobacco menace, the industry is adopting innovative ways to trap the youth. "We are glad that a move has been initiated to regulate OTT contents," she said.

Doesn't sound real: Sibal on WFI chief's 'will hang self if allegation proved' remarks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Thursday took a swipe at Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's remarks that he will hang himself even if a single allegation is proved against him, saying it does not sound real. The swipe by Sibal, a senior advocate who represented the protesting wrestlers in the Supreme Court, came a day after Singh, who is facing sexual harassment charges levelled by female wrestlers, said all wrestlers are like his children and he will not blame them as his blood and sweat have also gone into their success.

"I am once again saying that even if a single allegation is proven against me, I will hang myself," Singh had said while addressing a programme in Uttar Pradesh's Barabanki. In a tweet, Sibal said, "Brij Bhushan: 'Ready to hang myself if single allegation proved.' Suicide? Doesn't sound real!"

"Sounds familiar: PM on notebandi said wait...for just 50 days,...if shortcomings ready to accept any punishment...After 50 days nothing



happened then, nothing will happen now!" Sibal said. The wrestlers, including Olympic medalists Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia and Asian Games gold medallist Vinesh Phogat, who were protesting at Delhi's Jantar Mantar since April 23 demanding Singh's arrest, were removed from the site by police on Sunday after

they tried to march towards the new Parliament building following its inauguration. They were detained and were released later.

The Delhi Police has registered two FIRs against Singh. The first FIR pertains to the allegations levelled by a minor and it has been lodged under the provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act along with the sections of the Indian Penal Code concerning outraging modesty. The other FIR has been registered over complaints from women wrestlers pertaining to outraging modesty.

India, Russia review ties, discuss issues of global interest



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar meets his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Cape Town

PTI

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/CAPETOWN

India and Russia on Thursday reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral ties and issues of global interest during talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Capetown. Both the ministers are there to participate in the foreign ministers' conclave of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Jaishankar is also likely to hold bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart Qin Gang.

After holding talks with the Russian Foreign Minister on the sidelines of the conclave, Jaishankar said in a tweet "Good to meet FM Sergey Lavrov of Russia in Cape Town

this morning on BRICS FMM sidelines. Our discussions covered bilateral matters, BRICS, G20 and SCO."

India will hold the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and G-20 summits in July and September respectively.

In the last few months, India has become a leading importer of discounted crude oil from Russia notwithstanding increasing disquiet in the West over the procurement in view of Russian invasion of Ukraine. India's economic engagement with Russia has been on a major upswing in the last one year, largely due to its procurement of discounted Russian oil.

India has, so far, refrained from voting against Russia in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) regarding its military action in Ukraine. New Delhi has all along called for resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.

On Wednesday, Jaishankar said these are still "early days" for conflict resolution between Ukraine and Russia as presently, the focus is on problems such as a grain corridor, nuclear issues and matters related to the exchange of prisoners of war.

In an interview to DD India, Jaishankar noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had met both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) brings together five of the largest developing countries of the world, representing 41 per cent of the global population, 24 per cent of the global GDP and 16 per cent of the global trade. Jaishankar is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with his other BRICS counterparts including Chinese foreign Qin Gang.

NIA Special Court declares SFJ's Multani proclaimed offender

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA Special Court, Chandigarh, on Wednesday declared accused Jaswinder Singh alias Multani a Proclaimed Offender (PO) in the Model Jail Tiffin Bomb case of April 2022. Multani, a member of the banned 'unlawful association' Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), is currently based in Germany and has a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against him. The NIA Court had issued the NBW against him on January 5, 2023.

The NIA had also declared a reward of Rs 10 lakh and opened an LOC (Look Out Circular) against Multani.

"Multani has been identified as the mastermind behind planting of the IED bomb outside the wall of Model Jail, Buraill, Chandigarh with the intention of spreading terror and causing violence. The tiffin bomb, along with a detonator, was found in a black bag outside the Jail on April

22, last year," the NIA said in a statement. The case was originally registered against unknown persons by Chandigarh Police as FIR Number 33 under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908. The NIA subsequently took over the case in May 2022, and re-registered it with additional provisions under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

The NIA probe revealed that Multani had masterminded the crime from Germany. "He was in touch with pro-Khalistan operatives based in India, Pakistan and other countries, and was using them to promote violence and terror.

He was identifying, recruiting, motivating and radicalising youth of Punjab through social media, as per the investigations. He was also sending/raising funds and coordinating the movement of arms and ammunition, as well as explosives from Pakistan into India," the agency said.

ICG, DRI seize ₹20 cr gold from fishing boats in Gulf of Mannar in TN

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) in a joint with the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and Customs seized 32.689 Kgs of gold valued at approximately ₹20.2 Crores from two fishing boats at Gulf of Mannar area in Tamil Nadu. The consignment was being smuggled into India from Sri Lanka.

Giving details here, Coast Guard officials said on Thursday based on a specific input from the DRI regarding illegal smuggling of contraband from Sri Lanka to India, a joint operation was launched by Indian Coast Guard and DRI on May 30.

The joint teams deployed by both agencies kept a close surveillance on fishing vessels



operating in the Gulf of Mannar, especially near Indo-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).

On the morning of May 30, the joint team from Indian Coast Guard and

DRI, detected a suspicious boat approaching Mandapam fishing harbour. When challenged, the boat tried to evade apprehension but was finally apprehended in north Gulf of Mannar.

While being chased, the suspects threw the consignment into water prior interception.

62 DT plants may be solution to food security worries

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid concerns that frequent Aand extreme weather conditions are all set to threaten global food security, Indian researchers have stumbled upon at least 62 Desiccation-Tolerant (DT) Vascular Plant Species in the biodiversity hotspot, the Western Ghats which, they said, could have applications in agriculture, particularly in areas with scarcity of water. These plants can become so dry they crumble in the hand, but, if remoistened, will begin making proteins within minutes.

In other words, said the researchers that the DT plants are able to withstand extreme dehydration, losing up to 95 per cent of their water content, and they revive themselves once water is available again,

said the research published in the Nordic Journal of Botany.

In the inventory of 62 species, 16 are Indian endemic, and 12 are exclusive to the Western Ghats outcrops, highlighting the biodiversity region's importance as a global DT hotspot. In addition to rock outcrops, tree trunks in the partially shaded forests were found to be crucial habitats for DT species, the study said.

"This unique ability allows them to survive in harsh, arid environments that would be uninhabitable for most other plants. DT plants have been studied for their possible applications in agriculture, particularly in areas with limited water resources. In tropical regions, they are the predominant occupants of rock outcrops," said the study by scientists from ARI, Pune.

UPSC comes to aid of Manipur candidates

Offers alternative centres to people from strife-hit State to appear for recruitment tests for Govt jobs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has offered alternative centres to candidates from Imphal, Manipur to appear for Enforcement Officer/Accounts Officer and Assistant Provident Fund Commissioner examination, scheduled to be held on July 2, an official statement issued on Thursday said.

Manipur, which has been hit by ethnic conflict for nearly a month, witnessed a sudden spurt in clashes and firing between militants and security forces on Sunday, after a relative lull for over a fortnight. The death toll from the clashes since the ethnic violence began on May 3 has gone up to 80, officials said.

For the prevalent situation in the State of Manipur, the Commission has decided to offer alternative centres to the candidates of Imphal (Manipur) centre of the Enforcement Officer/Accounts Officer and Assistant Provident Fund Commissioner Examination, 2023, which is to be held on July 2, 2023, said the statement issued by the personnel ministry.

These candidates will be offered Aizawl (Mizoram), Kohima (Nagaland), Shillong



(Meghalaya), Dispur (Assam), Jorhat (Assam), Kolkata (West Bengal) and Delhi, it said.

The centre change option will be available to the candidates of Imphal centre through the Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) facility, the statement said.

A message in this regard will be sent to each candidate on his/her registered mobile number with the Commission. The candidates must use their said registered mobile number to avail this facility through IVRS.

Alternatively, a candidate may also contact the UPSC through telephone numbers 011-23070641, 23381073, 23384508 and 23387876 from 12 noon of June 2 till 5 pm of June 12.

Moreover, the option of

change of centres for such candidates will also be available on the website of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) from 12 noon of June 2, 2023 to 5 pm of June 12, 2023 on round-the-clock basis, the statement said.

On receipt of centre change options from the willing candidates through any of the above modes, they will be allocated to the venues of their chosen centres and accordingly, their e-admit cards will be released, it said.

A message confirming the change of centres shall be sent to each such candidate on his/her registered mobile number, the statement said, adding that the e-admit cards will be available for downloading from the UPSC's website.

Pawar calls on Shinde; sparks speculation

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that sparked fierce speculation in the State's political circles, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar on Thursday called on Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde at the latter's official residence 'Varsha' at Malabar Hills in south Mumbai.

Though the purpose of the meeting was not immediately known, 82-year-old Pawar spent more than half an hour with Shinde.

Incidentally, this was the first meeting between the two leaders after the transfer of power that took place under most dramatic circumstances in June last year.

Shinde, then a senior Shiv Sena leader, had rebelled against the then Chief Minister



and Sena president Uddhav Thackeray, walked out of the party along with 40-odd MLAs leading to the collapse of the Government Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), a grand alliance comprising Shiv Sena, the

NCP and the Congress. Shinde later teamed up the then Opposition BJP to form a new Government in the State.

Pawar's meeting with Shinde came at a time when Uddhav Thackeray was out of the country.

Informed sources said that Pawar had gone to meet Shinde to invite the latter for the 75th anniversary function of the Maratha Mandir group.

Later in the night, Shinde - speaking to a leading Marathi television channel - said that his meeting with Pawar he and the NCP supremo did not discuss any political matters. He said that the NCP chief had come to meet him for a function. "Don't read too much into this meeting," the Chief Minister told the TV channel.



Pak intruder shot by BSF in Samba

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

A Pakistani intruder was shot dead by BSF troops along the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir's (J&K's) Samba district in the early hours of Thursday.

The incident took place near Mangu Chak border outpost (BoP) in Samba sector around 3.00 AM.

A Jammu-based BSF spokesman in a statement said, "In the early hours of Thursday, alert BSF troops noticed suspicious movement of a person, who crossed the IB from Pakistan's side, in Samba area. He was challenged by the troops but the intruder kept advancing towards the border fencing. The troops opened fire, killing him."

The BSF has launched a search operation along the IB in Samba sector as the intruder's body is lying in the forward area. This is the second such incident of infiltration in Jammu division in the last two days.

On Wednesday, the Army foiled an infiltration bid with the arrest of three terrorists along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district.

The terrorists, from whom a huge consignment of arms and narcotics was recovered, were arrested after an exchange of fire near the border fence, according to a Defence spokesperson.

Meanwhile, continuing its crackdown on harbouring terrorists and providing logistic support to them, the State Intelligence Unit (SIU) Anantnag, on Thursday attached an under-construction residential house of a terrorist associate in Danwathpora Kokernag area of Anantnag district used for terrorist activities after obtaining necessary sanctions from the competent authority.

During the course of investigation in case FIR No. 103/2022 of Police Station Kokernag under UA(P) Act, one under-construction residential house belonging to terrorist associate namely Mohammad Ishaq Malik son of Mohammad Saifullah Malik resident of Danwathpora Kokernag has been found used by terrorists of proscribed terrorist outfit HM.

Major blaze averted by alert Rly staff



Fire in Alappuzha-Kannur Executive Express compartment stopped from spreading to BP fuel depot close by

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A major tragedy was averted by alert Railway staff who stopped a blaze in the Alappuzha-Kannur Executive Express compartment from spreading to a Bharat Petroleum fuel depot located a few meters away.

The fire broke out in the Alappuzha-Kannur Executive Express in the wee hours of Thursday as the train was getting ready for its journey to Alappuzha. A general compartment was gutted in the fire but fortunately no casualty has been reported. Later in the day, a migrant labourer from West Bengal was taken into custody by the police. Further investigations were on at the time of going to Press.

This is the second such incident to take place in Kerala during the last two months. Interestingly, on April 1 this year the same train met with arson as a Delhi youth set the train on fire that led to the death of three persons, including an infant.

The recurrence of the mishap has shocked police officers as well as the people of the State despite the fact that no untoward incidents took place. But what is intriguing is the fact that a Bharat Petroleum fuel depot was hardly a few meters away from the ill-fated compartment and had it not been for the alertness of the Railway staff, the fire would have led to an inferno.

While police officers remained tight-lipped, Dr Jacob Thomas, former Director General, Kerala Police told The Pioneer that it was a matter of concern. "The Inspector-General of Police, P Vijayan, who led the investigation into the April 1 fire was unceremoniously removed as the head of the anti-terrorism squad. It was his expertise and quick actions that led to the arrest of the Delhi youth within days of the incident from Maharashtra. But what he got in return was brickbats, and that does not augur well for the Service," said Dr Thomas.

Mekedatu project: We won't trouble you, be generous, says Shivakumar to TN Govt

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday raised a pitch for the contentious Mekedatu balancing reservoir across Cauvery river near Kanakapura and appealed to the Tamil Nadu Government to be generous.

Shivakumar, who hails from Kanakapura and is an MLA from there, said the Karnataka Government will have to make preparations required for the project. He also insisted that it will benefit not only Bengaluru but also the farmers of Tamil Nadu.

"With regard to Mekedatu, we had marched for water (in 2021). Tamil Nadu will not have any problem. After our march, (the then) Chief Minister (Basavaraj Bommai) had earmarked Rs 1,000 crore for the project. It has been proposed but has not been spent yet. We have to make the requisite preparations," Shivakumar told reporters here.

He said, "It's not that we have any hatred for Tamil Nadu or wage a war against it. Those residing there are our brethren and their brethren are here as well. So, there is no scope for hatred or jealousy. It is our project. It will benefit them as well. We have to help all the farmers in the Cauvery basin."

Stating that the key to unlock the Mekedatu issue is with the Centre, Shivakumar said there were orders on how much water Karnataka has to release. He wondered how Tamil Nadu will be at loss if Karnataka sets up a power plant there.

"We will store water and supply it to Bengaluru. It has been approved in the Cauvery Tribunal award. So there is no need to panic," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

He appealed to the Tamil Nadu Government to consider the project as it will not affect their interest.

"I request you (Tamil Nadu Government) that we will not trouble you. Be generous. We



too are generous. We are neighbouring States. We have fought enough and seen enough legal battles. It never helps. May we deal with it harmoniously. It will help in providing drinking water and benefit your farmers as well," Shivakumar said.

The Mekedatu multi-purpose (drinking and power) project involves building a balancing reservoir near Kanakapura in Ramanagara district. The estimated Rs 9,000-crore project, once completed, is aimed at ensuring drinking water to Bengaluru and neighbouring areas (4.75 TMC) and it can also generate 400 MW of power.

Karnataka has maintained that the project within its territory will benefit both States as the surplus water stored can be managed between the two during a distress year, and its implementation will in no way affect the interests of Tamil Nadu's farming communities, as there will be no impact on its share of water.

However, the neighbouring state is of the view that the project would "impound and divert" the uncontrolled water flow due to Tamil Nadu from Kabini sub-basin, the catchment area below Krishnarajasagara, and also from Simsha, Arkavathy and Suvarnavathi sub-basins besides other small streams.

Gujarat Govt to challenge acquittal of six people in 2013 rape case against Asaram

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat Government will move the High Court to challenge the acquittal of self-styled godman Asaram's wife, their daughter and his four disciples in a 2013 rape case in which he was sentenced to life imprisonment, an official said on Thursday. A court in Gandhinagar on January 31 sentenced Asaram to life imprisonment in the rape case filed by his former woman disciple in 2013.

Asaram's wife Laxmiben, their daughter Bharati, and his four disciples, who were accused by the prosecution of aiding and abetting the crime, were acquitted by the court for want of evidence. "The State's legal department passed a resolution on May 6 and directed the prosecution to file an appeal against the acquittal of six accused by a Gandhinagar court in the 2013 rape case against self-styled godman Asaram," special public prosecutor in the case, RC



Kodekar said.

The prosecution has also sought the Government's consent to challenge the Gandhinagar court's January 31 order, in which it suggested that life sentences for Asaram in Jodhpur and Ahmedabad cases should run concurrently. The Government's consent for the same is awaited, Kodekar said. The octogenarian godman is currently serving a life term in a Jodhpur jail in another case of raping a minor girl at his ashram in Rajasthan in 2013. The Gandhinagar court sentenced Asaram in the case for raping a woman disciple, who hailed from Surat, on several occasions from 2001 to 2007 at his ashram at Motera near Ahmedabad before her escape.

HC allows girl to reappear for NEET-UG exam being held specially for Manipur students

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday permitted a 18-year-old girl to reappear for the National Entrance Examination Test Under Graduate (NEET-UG) to be held for the second time for students of strife-torn Manipur as she could not complete the exam paper the first time due to a broken wrist.

A vacation Bench of Justices Manish Pitale and Neela Gokhale heard a plea filed by Dhanashree Jagatap seeking permission to reappear for the exam.

According to Jagatap, she arrived at the NEET-UG examination centre on May 7 but fell on the ground due to rush in the queue, resulting in dislocation of her right wrist joint.

She was taken to a nearby hospital and was later brought back to the centre where she was



allotted a writer, Jagatap said in the plea.

However, while the time period for the exam was three hours and 20 minutes, she started the exam late but was not given extra time to finish her paper, due to which she could not attempt the last part pertaining to Physics subject, Jagatap's plea said.

Seeking a direction to the National Testing Agency to permit her to reappear, Jagatap, in her plea, said although the NEET-UG examination is conducted only once every year, this

year due to sudden outbreak of violence in Manipur, NEET-UG 2023 examination is being held separately for students of that state.

The re-examination for students from Manipur is to be held in Bengaluru in Karnataka on June 6.

When the plea came up for hearing on Thursday, the Union government said it was willing to permit Jagatap to reappear for the exam on June 6 but on the condition that she shall not rely on the marks obtained by her in the May 7 examination.

Gujarat: Dalit man thrashed for wearing good clothes, sunglasses; seven booked

PTI ■ PALANPUR

A Dalit man was allegedly beaten up by a group of people from an upper caste community at a village in Banaskantha district of Gujarat as the accused were upset with him for wearing good clothes and sunglasses, police said on Thursday. The incident occurred at Mota Village in Palanpur taluka on Tuesday night, they said, adding that the victim and his mother, who was also attacked by them, were undergoing treatment at a hospital at present.

A FIR was filed against seven people on the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim, Jigar Shekhali. The complaint said that when the victim was standing outside his house on Tuesday morning, one of the seven accused approached him. He abused the victim and threatened to kill him saying he was "flying too high these days". The same night, when the complainant



was standing outside a village temple six accused from the community with Rajput surname came towards him. Armed with sticks, they asked him why he was dressed up and wore sunglasses. They then thrashed and dragged him. When his mother tried to save him, they assaulted her, threatened to kill her and tore her clothes.

The FIR against the accused was registered under IPC sections pertaining to rioting, outraging the modesty of a woman, voluntarily causing hurt. They were also booked under relevant sections of SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. No arrest has been made so far.



Dark clouds cover the skyline above the under-construction Tirupati Balaji temple ahead of its inauguration, in Jammu, on Thursday. PTI Photo

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Too bullish to be true

Morgan Stanley has painted a rosy picture of the economy, but it omits some key indicators

Government and Bharatiya Janata Party supporters must be happy over the recent report by Morgan Stanley, the global financial services firm. “This India is different from what it was in 2013. In a short span of 10 years, India has gained positions in the world order with significant positive consequences for the macro and market outlook,” it said. “India has transformed in less than a decade.” This is surely a vote of confidence for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his economic policies. The report has highlighted 10 big changes that have taken place since 2014. Bringing down the corporate tax rate at par with the same in other major economies and heavy infrastructure investment are among the top supply-side policy reforms, Morgan Stanley said. The soaring collection of goods and services tax (GST) and the growing share of digital transactions as a percentage of GDP indicate the formalisation of the economy, it added. Other pluses, according to Morgan Stanley, are direct transfer of subsidies to accounts of beneficiaries, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, flexible inflation targeting, focus on foreign direct investment (FDI), Government support for corporate profits, a new law for the realty sector, and MNC sentiment at multi-year high. Manufacturing and capital spending as a percentage of GDP has continuously risen, Morgan Stanley said, adding export market share is projected to more than double to 4.5 per cent by 2031.



Much of what Morgan Stanley has said is correct, but at places optimism seems a bit excessive. It seems to have overlooked a few facts. For instance, FDI inflows into the country fell by 16 per cent to \$71 billion on a gross basis in the last fiscal, though the decline has been attributed to weak global factors. Similarly, manufacturing remains a laggard; its share continues to languish at 16-17 per cent of the country's GDP. The Government has made big claims about the potential of industrial growth; it launched ambitious programmes like Make in India and the production-linked incentive or PLI scheme for several sectors. And yet, manufacturing's share in GDP is no different than it was in 2011, the year in which the National Manufacturing Policy was announced with the target to make the share go up by 2022. Then there is the issue of jobs; the economy is not able to generate quality employment. This reflects in consumption patterns. The sales of luxury products are zooming, whereas the items used by common people like kitchen appliances are not doing as well. Growth accelerated to 6.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2022-23, and for the entire fiscal it was upwardly revised to 7.2 per cent. For 2023-24 too, India is likely to grow by over 6 per cent, and will be the fastest growing big economy. The Government must persist with reforms and ensure the more supply-side bottlenecks are removed so that the fruits of growth and development are equitably distributed.

PICTALK



Burqa-clad students play cricket in the J J Hospital premises at Byculla in Mumbai

PTI

The nuisance that is convocation ceremony

Ceremonies get value only if they are conducted appropriately. Mimicking an auspicious ceremony only demeans its value

Does education have any value in life? Does a degree guarantee a job? These questions always rhyme in our society.

Of course, these questions need detailed discussion. But the root cause of these questions is the declining value of education in today's society, due to the mockeries shown by education institutions. Even from kindergarten onwards, many private educational institutions conduct graduation ceremonies, making a mockery of our education system. We are demeaning the value of actual degree certificates through these ceremonies.

According to UGC, “Convocation” means a ceremonial assembly of a university, normally held for conferring Degrees and other awards to its eligible candidates. Usually, it is the universities that conduct convocation ceremonies in India. But in recent times, many colleges conduct convocation ceremonies or graduation ceremonies by their colleges, students post on social media stating that they have officially become graduates. During earlier times, the convocation



ties attend the function. The funny thing is that even students who failed university examinations also get a certificate at these graduation ceremonies. Some college authorities make poor students and parents believe that these certificates have more value than the ones issued by the universities. The ceremony itself is a huge business involving many event managers. A photo in graduation attire can convince the public that the particular person is a degree holder. This can fetch them status and demand in the marriage market. It's like what we see in the movie ‘Three Idiots.’

After attending the graduation ceremony conducted by their colleges, students post on social media stating that they have officially become graduates. During earlier times, the convocation

ceremonies are performed only by universities where the university authority hand over graduation certificates. Every student dreams of wearing the ceremonial convocation dress and taking a photo with the degree certificate. There was a time, before the 1990s, when every household used to hang pictures of their graduating family members. During that time, students from every stream and every level, undergraduate to higher degrees, had the privilege to attend convocation ceremonies conducted at universities. Society viewed a university graduate with awe and much respect. With the increase in the number of graduates passing out from our universities, the convocation ceremonies are limited to professional courses and higher degrees like PhD.

The value given to original degree certificates issued by good universities is slowly diminishing because of ceremonies conducted by these private institutions. The students and society at large are finding it challenging to understand which is genuine and which is fake. There are many people with “Dr.” affil-

iation in our community, whose degree is awarded by private institutions. These institutions, which are mostly registered societies, provide honorary doctoral degrees by charging hefty fees. They even give professional awards after taking huge fees from the nominees. Ceremonies get value only if it is conducted appropriately by the appropriate agency concerned. Mimicking an auspicious ceremony will demean its value. Can we mimic our marriage ceremony to show it to someone? All educational institutions should respect the value associated with various ceremonies and show the correct path to the students and society. Otherwise, our students shall carry certificates that have only a paper's value and have value only on social media platforms. We need to build quality graduates in every domain of knowledge in nation-building. For this, educational institutions should stay away from such gimmicks that make a mockery of our education system and should show the true path to our youngsters.

(The writer is a columnist))



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

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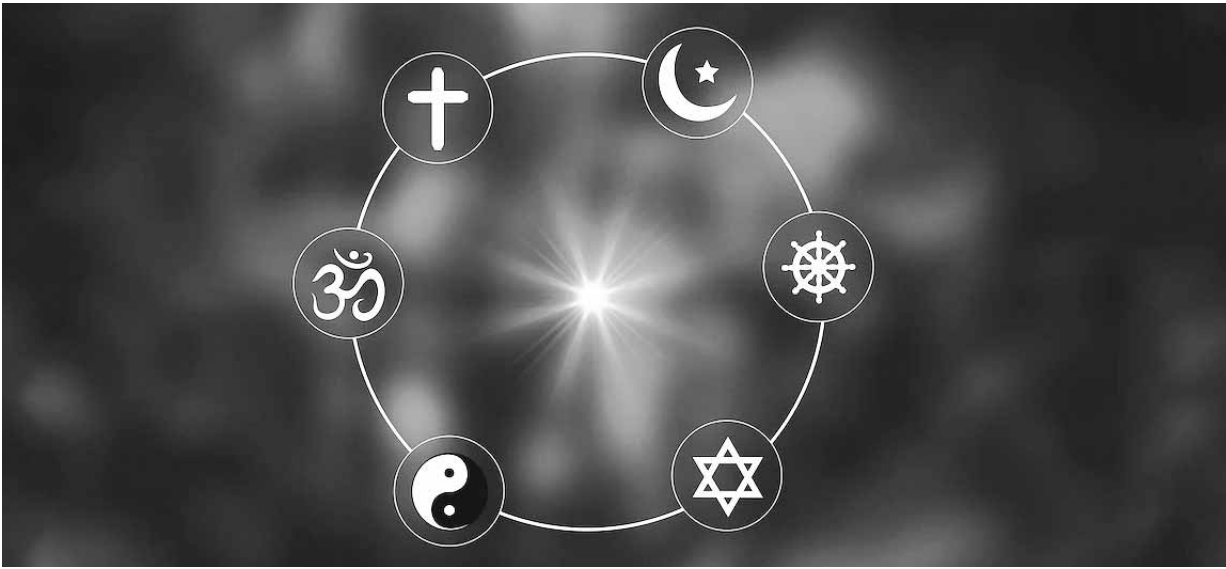
(The writer is a columnist))

Syncretism: A vision for India's future

As India moves forward, it must consciously embrace its rich diversity, essential for nurturing a harmonious society that grows together

The inauguration of the New Parliament Building has heralded a new history of India in its 75th year of Independence. Leaving apart the controversies wrangling in different corridors, we must realize that the value of democracy lies in upholding the essence and spirit of this new development and with it the whole idea of multiculturalism and the syncretic tradition that binds this nation of 140 crore Indians together. ‘Sarva Dharma Prarthana’ or Inter-Faith Prayer is one of the great steps in this direction which happened at the inaugural programme on May 28.

India, known for its rich cultural tapestry and religious diversity, has long embraced the idea of syncretism and multiculturalism. This inherent acceptance of diverse beliefs and traditions is exemplified through inter-faith prayers, which hold great significance in various ceremonies across the country. These prayers serve as a unifying force, promoting harmony, tolerance, and cultural integration. Inter-faith prayers at the inaugural ceremony, symbolize the nation's commitment to embracing and maintaining its cultural syncretism. By incorporating inter-faith prayers into the ceremony, the diversity that India stands for was celebrated. This inclusive approach not only strengthens the social fabric but also sends a strong message to the world about India's commitment to secularism and pluralism. Inter-faith prayers hold immense significance in India, as they bring together people from different religious backgrounds/faith, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose. India's cultural tapestry is intricately woven with the threads of various religions, each contributing to the vibrant fabric of society. From Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism to Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, the Baha'i, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and others, India has been a melting pot of diverse religious beliefs, rituals, and practices. ‘Sarva Dharma Prarthana’ acts as the glue that holds this mosaic together, fostering an environment of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. These prayers serve as a powerful



reminder of our shared humanity and transcend religious boundaries, emphasizing the common values and aspirations that bind us as a nation. As the seat or Temple of democracy, the Parliament represents the voice of the people and their diverse aspirations. symbolizing the inclusive spirit of India, for India's syncretic traditions are deeply embedded in its cultural fabric. The country's history is replete with instances where different religious beliefs and practices have intermingled and influenced each other. This syncretism is evident in various aspects of Indian life, including festivals, rituals, and philosophical ideologies. Festivals such as Diwali, Eid, Christmas, and Guru Nanak Jayanti to name a few, are celebrated with equal enthusiasm by people of different faiths. These celebrations not only showcase cultural diversity but also provide an opportunity for individuals to learn about and appreciate different religious traditions.

It is undeniable that India's artistic heritage spans millennia, with influences from various cultures and civilizations. The intricate carvings of the ancient temples in Khajuraho, the Mughal architecture of the Taj Mahal, and the vibrant frescoes of Rajasthan are just a few examples of how differ-

ent artistic styles have merged to create a distinct Indian aesthetic. By appreciating and preserving these art forms, India not only showcases its multicultural heritage but also encourages dialogue and understanding among diverse communities. India's rich spiritual heritage and its embrace of diverse philosophies have given rise to a syncretic tapestry, interwoven with the teachings of renowned saints and philosophers throughout history. Kabir, the 15th-century poet and mystic, whose teachings emphasized the unity of all religions, says, “Dheere dheere re mana, dheere sab kuch hoi. Mali seenche sau ghada, ritu aaye phal hoye”, embodies the essence of cultural syncretism by emphasizing the gradual evolution of spiritual growth and the universality of divine wisdom.

Swami Vivekananda also stressed the importance of embracing diversity and unity among religions. He famously said, “I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true.” Conceptualized by Swami Vivekananda himself and designed and developed by his engineer brother-monk Swami Vijnanananda, the Ramakrishna Mission in

AS INDIA EMBARKED ON A NEW CHAPTER WITH THE INAUGURATION OF ITS NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING, IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR ALL OF US TO VALUE SUCH WISDOM AND TEACHINGS THAT HAVE INSPIRED INDIVIDUALS AND NATIONS ALIKE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'DRESS CODE' FOR TEMPLES

Sir — As per the report, the temple worshippers from across Maharashtra's villages have pushed back against the imposition of a 'dress code' for visiting temples for both male and female devotees. A 'vastra samhita' or dress code was imposed mid-May at four temples of Nagpur, these include the Gopalkrishna temple in Dhantoli (a middle-class settlement within the city), Sankatmochan Panchmukhi Hanuman temple in Saoner (a farmers town near Nagpur), the Brihaspati temple, in Hingna (an industrial township bordering the Wardha district), and the Durgamata temple at Koradi (the thermal power township located north of Nagpur). Religious bodies should refrain from issuing such diktats that would create new problems within society. "Parents in rural areas do not buy full pants for young boys until they go to junior college. When we were in school, we did not get to wear full pants until Class 10. We had to wear shorts to school. Our parents used to tell us that they would give us full pants only after we entered Class 11. This is prevalent in rural areas across Maharashtra. Then why are little boys being stopped from entering temples? Has any God said, 'Don't allow kids wearing shorts to come for my darshan'?" While several other popular shrines in the state are exercising caution and not rushing to impose the dress code, the issue has the potential of blowing up into a full-scale political confrontation

N Mateeni | Mumbai

MANIPUR UNREST

Sir — Amid the ongoing tensi in Manipur, Olympic medallist Mirabai Chanu and weightlifter kunjarani devi signed a memorandum to Home Minister Amit Shah, along with 11 other athletes demanding to restore peace in Manipur and sought rigid action against the extremist groups behind the violence as soon as possible that if peace

Telangana suicides



Recently, eight students committed suicide in Telangana after the announcement of the intermediate examination results as they failed or failed poorly. Perhaps, this was one of those cases where exam-related suicide was reported in a newspaper. There are many instances where these deaths go unreported. Society is by and large mum to the increasing number of suicides by students close on the heels of the declaration of results of important examinations that decide entry into professional courses because taking one's own life after the dec-

is not restored, they will return their medals. It is concerning that Manipur BJP rules the state but the BJP doesn't bother those who lost their loved ones rather busy conducting expensive election campaigns for Prime minister in states across the country due to which the government is still unable to normalize the unrest and restore the peace.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

BATTLE OF NARRATIVES

Sir — The battle of narratives between the Congress and the BJP is once again at a peak. PM Modi and Rahul Gandhi are attacking each other. Whenever the election is about to come, the ruling and the opposition start taking voters under their guise by opening their bags of populist promises. If we look at the election manifests of the last decade, it is known that all the parties have run the same agenda of distributing freebies. After getting the power, even if the election promises

laration of exam results is not considered a social evil by most stakeholders in India even though every year history repeats.

Plenty of them eye careers that suit them but are forced to look elsewhere due to parental pressure. It is indisputable that parental pressure is the biggest contributor to augmented anxiety and depression among students paving the way for suicides. For a long time, it is not what the child wants but it is almost like what the 'father and mother want' that has pushed children to the brink. Of course, obtaining excellent marks is a sure shot highway to a reasonable job in later life. But it's doubtful as to whether an individual, having painstakingly defeated a mind-boggling rat race at a young age against his/her wishes and aspirations, would live with peace and harmony rest of his/her life despite bagging ranks and marks. Self-employment is never considered a great option in the country, and the results are there to see.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

become a jumla, the leaders will not mind. The poor people would have sold their vote by getting trapped in the promises of freebies, while the upper class has no worries about voting and inflation. The middle class has to bear the brunt. Unfortunately the voters are too gullable and fall for such gimmicks election after election. The politicians know that public memory is short and there are a number of ways to distract them and harness their votes. But this is not what the maker of the constitution Baba Saheb Ambedkar had contemplated. Over the period of 75 years the standards of public life have gone down drastically and speaking lies and even spreading hate has become a new normal. This is not what makes India great it only is a surefire recipe to take the country down. Hope politicians are listening.

Jahangir Ali | Maharashtra

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

IMPORTANCE OF PM MODI'S US STATE VISIT

Domestic politics aside, there is much at stake for PM Modi's upcoming state visit to the US



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be on a high-profile visit to the United States later this month. The state visit would be the first for the PM, and for the president of the USA and the second during his current tenure, as a host. This visit is happening against the backdrop of many high-profile visits by Indian and American diplomats, secretaries and ministers setting the ground, plank by plank, in what could be one of the most significant milestones in the India US bilateral relationship. The last such fillip to the relationship came in the period from 2005 to 2009 when India went nuclear and, US keeping aside its domestic political reservations and ally concerns (read Pakistan), eased India into the nuclear club, finally culminating in, then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's state visit to the US. A state visit is the highest level of honour and prestige accorded bilaterally, and is considered to be the top-notch level in diplomatic relationships.

Prime Minister Modi's scheduled state visit was supposed to have been preceded, by his meeting with US President Joe Biden, at least thrice in less than a month. These included bilateral meetings during G7, to which India was invited, a meeting in Papua New Guinea and a QUAD leaders' summit before culminating in a state visit. However, President Biden had to cut short his trip to the Pacific Ocean Island nation and Australia, due to domestic issues, leading to a few hurried meetings on the sidelines of the G7 in Japan.

The domestic environment for both India and the US is just warming up, to what would be an extremely hot and noisy space for the world's oldest and largest democracy. India and the US face general elections next year and the domestic political climate, if not decibels, are already exceeding tolerable limits. Moving forward it would be unbearable and rough. This casts the dice for these leaders, both of whom are seeking re-election (PM Modi for the third term and President Biden second term), to make it worthwhile for their respective constituencies, which will send them back to the top posts. The US president would have to ensure that his voters, if not the congress and some of his colleagues, see the value of upgrading the India-US bilateral relationship, despite, India's conspicuous silence on Ukraine (except for it is not a time for War statement), close relations and dependencies on Russia and some uncomfortable questions regarding human rights, religious freedom etc.

Indian Prime Minister on his part would like to take the spectacle quotient a tad higher than the Howdy Modi, grand concerts event, when



PM Mod and then President Donald Trump, jointly addressed thousands of Indian Americans in Houston. The PM would expect a significant outcome from the state visit, albeit the cheering crowds, public events would definitely be a part of the package. The PM who was recently on a visit to Australia and Pacific island countries, where he got a rock stars welcome, addressed large cheering crowds in packed arenas and was even called "the boss" by the Australian PM. The Indian American groups are also prepping up for PM Modi's visit, as many of them are expected to participate in some key official ceremonies at the white house, including witnessing the 21-gun salute and perhaps yoga sessions led by Indian PM on International World yoga day on June 21st.

It would be worth remembering that PM Modi's visit would also follow opposition leader Rahul Gandhi's ten days trip to the US, where he interacted with a wide array of stakeholders, civil society, think tanks etc on questions surrounding Indian democracy. The larger questions regarding shrinking space for democratic manoeuvre and political opposition in India, which have been brought out by the opposition leader during his earlier visits to UK etc and which have led to some influencer groups doubting Indian democratic credentials, could have been contained, by the time PM Modi lands in the US. Domestic politics aside there is much at stake for PM Modis' upcoming state visit to the US.

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

Judgement, education and effective action

Whether one is the top man or the so-called bottom man, there is always an element of decision-making vested in the role



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM



One of the critical components of decision-making is the ability to decipher decision spaces. Consider the example of a doorkeeper. By any standards, it is a lowly rank and humble in many ways. Yet, in times of knocking at the door, that position becomes more important than that of the Chairman himself. It is the doorkeeper's decision to let somebody in or keep him out. It is a power loaded with security concerns and at times with grave implications of time, life and death. Consider a situation where somebody is ill, and a doctor has been summoned in the late hours of the evening to the building to take care of the ailing person.

The doctor does not get a security clearance, but his entry into the building is critical. Like anything else, there is a risk involved, and somebody may be impersonating the doctor; there may be a rogue doctor or the doctor himself may be very impatient—the possibilities are several. The judgement of the gatekeeper and the judgement to be exercised on the spot make him the kingpin, not only for the moment of the act but indeed for much else, besides.

The derivation is obvious: everyone needs to have effective decision-making skills. The story goes that King Shivaji approached his Rajgad Fort near Pune, in the early hours of the morning after



THE PRIME MINISTER HAS TO NOT ONLY LEAD BUT ALSO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KEY DECISIONS. HIS ABILITY TO JUDGE AND DECIDE WHO TO CONSENT TO, AND TO WHAT EXTENT IS CRUCIAL.

(The writer is a policy analyst)

a long long ride and wanted to enter the Rajgad Fort. He had enemies at his heels. The head of security of the fort had it from the king (Maharaj) himself (in this case, Shivaji Maharaj) that no exceptions would be allowed for entry into the fort before dawn.

Shivaji Maharaj had some enemies in his hot pursuit, which he had evaded. The Head of Security took the call that the order of the Maharaj was sacred and Shivaji would not be let into the fort. Shivaji tried to explain to him that his life may be at risk and that he had been exercising his supreme powers by ordering a gate to be opened. The Head of Security refused to comply. When Shivaji asked him who would be responsible for his security, the Head of Security responded, "I am the head of security, and I shall be responsible. We shall make preparations for your comfort outside the fort, and you will be absolutely safe. Our full force will protect you and protect you successfully." The story concludes that Shivaji was finally allowed entry into the fort only at dawn. One of his first acts after his entry was to elevate the rank to the Head of Security.

The narrative, as it is, needs no comment. The larger part of the story is that it makes a point. In the ultimate analysis of the making of the human being: health and judgement are the two most important things. Judgement cannot be taught; it cannot be 'given.' It has to grow from within. It is a judgement that makes a person.

Judgement is both subtle and growing. In a parliamentary system, the Prime Minister is the head of the Executive. He has to not only lead but also be responsible for the key decisions. His ability to judge and decide who to consent to, and to what extent is crucial. He has also to assess to what extent amalgamate the various strands of advice received.

This brings us to the essence of training of the mind and education. The current rollout of the National Education Policy raises these questions in many ways. With increasing frequency, it is being asked many, how so many people, who do not even finish their school education become such original thinkers and make such brilliant contributions. Rabindra Nath Thakur is a common reference.

Indeed, many formally educated people do not get very far and flounder in the race of life in a worse-than-mediocre pattern. This appears as an enigma when it is actually it is not so. The truth is that creativity and judgement propelled even those who had not completed their formal education to higher levels of achievement. Higher levels of achievement do not necessarily follow high degrees. In the case of the educated, the natural achievements which would have followed creativity were sharpened and results were better than if they had not been educated at all.

It is soulful to remember this and use it as a compass to navigate one's own career and those dependent on one. The meaning, the content, the delivery, and the keeping alive of the educational processes are important phenomena. The whys and wherefores of this process need to be understood and developed more fruitfully as a part of any project related to the educational process. Hopefully, as the National Education Policy makes its rollout, these questions will not only surface but get addressed.

Caribbean medical degree can lead to a career in the West

Pursuing medical education in a Caribbean university is a viable route to a career in medicine in the West, although it is not without its challenges

In recent years, there has been a significant surge in the demand for doctors and the aspirations to pursue a medical career. However, the available resources and facilities have struggled to match the pace of this demand, resulting in a considerable gap. Consequently, numerous students have opted to relocate to different countries in search of admission to medical courses, as the distribution of requirements and available facilities remains imbalanced.

To pursue a medical career in the USA or Canada, students typically follow a structured path. Upon finishing their undergraduate degree, students are required to clear the MCAT exam as a prerequisite for admission to medical school. Once a student enters



MAMTA PURBEY

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medical school, they spend another 4-5 years in a medical school which would include their pre-clinical and clinical. Once the student is done with clinical rotations and graduates from medical school, s/he applies for residency. Students submit applications through the National Residency Matching Program (NRMP). Depending on the specialisation they opt for, many doctors complete their residency programs in 3 to 7 years.

To become a doctor in the US/Canada, students have the option to pursue a Caribbean medical college route. This involves selecting a reputable and accredited medical school in the Caribbean and completing a 2-year pre-med program, followed by 2 years of pre-clinical studies. The stu-

dents then continue their clinical rotations in the USA/Canada. Studying medicine in the Caribbean region offers a multitude of benefits for aspiring medical students aiming to become practising doctors in the USA, UK, and Canada.

These advantages make Caribbean medical schools an appealing choice for those seeking a top-tier education, practical exposure, and a unique cultural experience. Additionally, these medical schools hold recognition from esteemed international organizations like the World Health Organization and the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates, ensuring that graduates can practice medicine across all 50 states in the US or in the UK,

and Canada, among other various countries worldwide.

Lower Financial Burden: Studying MBBS at leading Caribbean medical colleges generally comes at a lower cost compared to US medical colleges, including both public and private institutions. While certain Caribbean colleges may have costs that approach those of US medical colleges, the overall expenses remain significantly more affordable.

Hassle-free Admission: Unlike other foreign medical universities, getting admission to top Caribbean medical colleges is less complex. Apart from decent credentials at the school level, you need to clear the country-specific medical entrance exam such as NEET in India. Most Caribbean colleges have rolling admissions

with three intakes- January, May and September.

Diverse Learning: Caribbean medical universities attract a diverse student population from various countries and cultural backgrounds. This multicultural environment fosters a rich learning experience, promoting cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.

Gateway to the US: The Caribbean region is globally recognized for its esteemed medical schools. These institutions hold accreditation from prominent international organizations including the Caribbean Accreditation Authority for Education in Medicine and Other Health Professions (CAAM-HP), World Health Organization (WHO), and the Educational

Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG). Such recognition empowers graduates to pursue medical practice in diverse countries across the globe. International medical graduates (IMGs) have a vital role in the American healthcare system, making up 25 per cent of the existing U.S. physician workforce. Among these IMGs, 18 per cent are graduates of Caribbean medical schools, indicating that approximately 4.5 per cent of licensed doctors in the U.S. obtained their MD degrees from Caribbean institutions.

Accredited Medical Schools: While choosing a Caribbean medical school, it's very important to check the recognitions and accreditations to ensure quality edu-

cation. Only schools that are recognized by CAAM-HP and accredited by the US Dept of Education, New York State Education Department and other US & Canadian medical education-related departments/bodies should be chosen to ensure a smooth transition into USA / Canada.

Pursuing a medical education at a Caribbean medical school offers a viable route to a rewarding career in medicine, although it is not without its challenges. While the entry requirements may be less stringent compared to those in the US, achieving exceptional grades and excelling in USMLE exams are still essential for securing a position in an American residency program.

NATO presses Turkiye to approve Sweden’s membership

AP ■ OSLO/NORWAY

NATO on Thursday ramped up pressure on member nation Turkiye to drop its objections to Sweden’s membership as the military organisation seeks to deal with the issue by the time US President Joe Biden and his counterparts meet next month. The 31-member alliance is also looking at boosting Ukraine’s non-member status in NATO and preparing a framework for security commitments that it can offer once the war with Russia is over. Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said NATO wants to bring Sweden into the fold by the time allied leaders meet in Lithuania on July 11-12. The allies also hope to make progress on long-term funding and the security plan for Ukraine at the same event, Stoletenberg said. He said the allies continue to agree that Ukraine will become a NATO member but that in the meantime the

alliance should provide it with security commitments and substantial new funding. “Our focus today was on how we can bring Ukraine closer to NATO where it belongs,” he said. “No one knows when the war will end, but we must ensure that when it does we have credible arrangements in place to guarantee Ukraine’s security in the future and break Russia’s cycle of aggression,” Stoltenberg said. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the allies were “focused on helping Ukraine to build up its medium- and long-term security capacity so that if and when the current aggression settles, Ukraine has the full capacity to deter future aggression.” “NATO has a role in that in terms of the work it can do to bring Ukraine up to NATO standards,” he said. He did not elaborate. Fearing they might be targeted by Moscow after Russia invaded Ukraine last year,



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, left, listens as gives a statement to the media, at Oslo City Hall, during a meeting of NATO's foreign ministers in Oslo on Thursday. AP/PTI

Sweden and Finland abandoned their traditional positions of military nonalignment to seek protection under NATO’s security umbrella. Finland became NATO’s 31st member country in April.

NATO must agree unanimously for countries to join. Turkiye’s government accuses Sweden of being too lenient on terrorist organisations and security threats, including militant Kurdish groups and people

associated with a 2016 coup attempt. Hungary has also delayed its approval, but the reasons why have not been made publicly clear. Stoltenberg said that he would travel to Ankara “in the near future to continue to address how we can ensure the fastest possible accession of Sweden.” He said his and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s staffs were working on dates for the trip. “My message is that Sweden has delivered, and the time has come to ratify Sweden,” he told reporters at the conclusion of two days of informal talks between alliance foreign ministers to prepare for the summit in Lithuania. Others echoed his comments. Its time for Sweden to join now,” Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt told reporters. “I’m confident that also Hungary will ratify the accession protocol,” Stoltenberg said.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said that “it is essential that we can finally welcome Sweden as the 32nd member.” She stressed that the Swedish government has Berlin’s “full support”. Sweden’s foreign minister, Tobias Billström, said that “it is time for Turkey and Hungary to start the ratification of the Swedish membership to NATO”. He said that “everything (that) bars Sweden joining NATO will be seen as wine for (Russian president Vladimir) Putin”. For months, Sweden, Finland and Turkiye held talks to try to address Ankara’s concerns. Billstrom said he expected things to be made clear at a new meeting of this “permanent joint mechanism” in coming weeks. He noted that as of Thursday, Sweden had tightened its anti-terrorism laws. It is now it illegal to finance, recruit for or publicly encourage “a terrorist organisation”, or to travel abroad with the inten-

tion of joining such groups. The time may be ripe for movement. Sweden’s membership became embroiled in campaigning for elections in Turkiye, which Erdogan won on Sunday. Erdogan has also been seeking upgraded US fighter jets, and Washington signalled this week that they might be delivered. “I spoke to Erdogan and he still wants to work on something on the F-16s. I told him we wanted a deal with Sweden. So let’s get that done,” Biden said on Monday. On Tuesday, Blinken insisted that the issues of Sweden’s membership and the fighter jets were distinct. However, he stressed that the completion of both would dramatically strengthen European security. “Both of these are vital, in our judgement, to European security,” Blinken told reporters. “We believe that both should go forward as quickly as possible; that is to say Sweden’s accession and moving forward on the F-16 package more broadly.”

N Korean leader’s sister slams US for criticising failed satellite launch

AP ■ SEOUL

The powerful sister of North Korean Kim Jong Un on Thursday accused the United States of “gangster-like” hypocrisy for criticizing her country’s failed launch of a military spy satellite and insisted a successful launch will be made soon. Kim Yo Jong said North Korea’s efforts to acquire space-based reconnaissance capabilities were a legitimate exercise of its sovereign right and restated the country’s rejection of UN Security Council resolutions that ban it from conducting any launch involving ballistic missile technology. Her comments on state media came a day after the rocket carrying the satellite failed. North Korea said the rocket lost thrust after a stage separation and crashed in waters off the Korean Peninsula’s western coast. Washington, South Korea and Japan had quickly criticized the launch. Adam Hodge, a



spokesperson at the US National Security Council, said Washington strongly condemns the North Korean launch because it used banned ballistic missile technology, raised tensions and risked destabilizing security in the region and beyond. In her statement, Kim Yo Jong briefly mentioned Hodge’s comments before saying the United States “is letting loose a hackneyed gibberish prompted by its brigandish and abnormal thinking.” “If the DPRK’s satellite launch should be particularly censured, the US and all other

countries, which have already launched thousands of satellites, should be denounced. This is nothing but sophism of self-contradiction,” she said, using the initials of North Korea’s formal name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. She noted how the United States closely monitors the North through its own reconnaissance satellites and other aerial assets, calling the Americans a “group of gangsters” who would deem it as “illegal and threatening” had North Korea attempted to send a satellite into space by balloon. “The far-fetched logic that only the DPRK should not be allowed to do so according to the (UN Security Council’s) resolution’ which bans the use of ballistic rocket technology irrespective of its purpose, though other countries are doing so, is clearly a gangster-like and wrong one of seriously violating the DPRK’s right to use space and illegally oppressing it,” she said.

Bombing kills 3 in Kyiv

AP ■ KYIV

Russia launched a pre-dawn missile barrage on Ukraine’s capital Thursday, killing 3 people including a 9-year-old and her mother, officials said, and damaging apartment buildings, schools and a children’s hospital. It was the highest casualty toll from a single attack on Kyiv over the past month. A 33-year-old woman died as she and others waited to enter a locked Kyiv air raid shelter, leaving her and others at the mercy of falling missile fragments, according to her husband. Officials ordered an investigation into what happened. The latest Russian attack, using what Ukrainian officials said were short-range Iskander ground-launched missiles, coincided with events scheduled in Kyiv to celebrate International Children’s Day. Those events were cancelled. Ukrainian air defences shot down all 10 cruise and ballistic missiles launched by the Kremlin’s forces, but falling debris caused damage and casualties on the ground, wounding 16 people, according to author-



Police inspect a building damaged by a Russian night attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Thursday. AP/PTI

ities. Russia has kept up a steady barrage on the Ukrainian capital and other parts of the country in recent weeks as Kyiv readies what it says is a counteroffensive to push back Moscow’s troops, 15 months after their full-scale invasion. Kyiv was the target of drone and missile attacks on 17 days last month. Ukraine’s first lady, Olena Zelenska, said one child was in hospital after the attack. “Children’s Day has to be about

safe childhood, summer, life,” she tweeted. “But today it is about new crimes of (Russia) against children.” Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba tweeted that the dead included a 9-year-old girl, her mother and another woman. At the Kyiv air raid shelter that was locked, Yaroslav Riabchuk said he and his wife of 17 years, Natalia, were outside with others when he ran around the back of the building to summon the guard in charge.

Russian court prepares way for new trial against jailed Kremlin foe

Moscow (AP): A Moscow court on Wednesday set a new date for a hearing paving the way for another trial of imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny that could keep him in prison for decades. The Moscow City Court initially scheduled for Wednesday a preliminary hearing to discuss technical issues related to the trial of the Kremlin’s arch foe but moved it to June 6 without giving a reason. The court rejected a request by Navalny’s lawyers for more time to examine voluminous case materials. Navalny has said that the new extremism charges which he rejected as “absurd” could keep him in prison for another 30 years. He said an investigator told him that he would also face a separate military court trial on terrorism charges that could potentially carry a life sentence.

China accuses US of interfering in training exercise

Beijing (AP): China’s Defence Ministry accused the US of “interference and surveillance” of a naval exercise in the South China Sea ahead of an incident in which a Chinese fighter pilot flew at high speed in front of a US Air Force reconnaissance plane, underscoring the rupture in contacts between their militaries. A statement issued late Wednesday by the Chinese military’s Southern Theater Command said it had “organized air forces to track and monitor the whole process, dealt with it according to laws and regulations, and operated professionally.” The US Indo-Pacific Command said the pilot of a Chinese J-16 fighter had “performed an unnecessarily aggressive maneuver” while intercepting a US Air Force RC-135 aircraft on May 26, flying directly in front of the plane’s nose. “The RC-135 was conducting safe and routine operations over the South China Sea in international airspace, in accordance with international law,” the US. side said. “We expect all countries in the Indo-Pacific region to use international airspace safely and in accordance with international law.” Southern Theater Command spokesperson Senior Col. Zhang Nandong was quoted in the statement accusing the U.S. of “mixing up black and white and making false accusations in an attempt to confuse the international audience.” “We solemnly urge the U.S. to conscientiously restrain the actions of frontline naval and air forces, strictly abide by relevant international laws and relevant agreements, and prevent accidents at sea and in the air,” Zhang said. “If not, the US will bear all consequences,” he said. Zhang did not say what international laws he was referring to. China’s claim to virtually the entire South China Sea is not recognized by the US and strongly contested by other countries bordering on the strategic waterway, through which an estimated \$5 trillion of international trade passes each year.

Court charges 5 men for Irish peacekeeper’s killing

Beirut (AP): Lebanon’s military tribunal on Thursday charged five men with the killing of an Irish UN peacekeeper in December, a senior judicial official said. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, alleged all five are linked with Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. The indictment followed a half-year probe after an attack on a UN peacekeeping convoy near the town of Al-Aqbiya in Lebanon’s south, a stronghold of Hezbollah. The shooting resulted in the death of Pvt. Seán Rooney, 24, of Newtown Cunningham, Ireland, and seriously wounded Pvt. Shane Kearney, 22. The wounded peacekeeper was medically evacuated to Ireland. Two other Irish soldiers sustained light injuries. The indictment includes evidence from bystanders’ testimonies, as well as audio recordings and video footage from surveillance cameras, the Lebanese official said.

Turkish election body confirms Erdogan’s victory in runoff vote

AP ■ ANKARA

Turkiye’s election board certified the results of the May 28 presidential runoff election on Thursday, confirming that Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has been a dominant force in Turkish politics for the past two decades, has won a third term as president. Ahmet Yener, the head of the Supreme Electoral Council said Erdogan won 52.18 per cent of the votes, while main opposition party leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu garnered 47.82 per cent. According to these results, it is understood that Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been elected president and the results were sent to the Official Gazette for publication,” Yener announced. He said turnout was 85.72 per cent. Already Turkiye’s longest serving leader, Erdogan, 69, can now govern until 2028. Unconfirmed reports say he is scheduled to take the oath of office on Saturday, after which he is expected to announce the lineup of his new



Cabinet. Erdogan faces a host of domestic challenges, from a battered economy to pressure for the repatriation of millions of Syrian refugees and the need to rebuild after a devastating earthquake in February that killed 50,000 and leveled cities. Investors will be watching closely to see if Mehmet Simsek, a respected former finance minister and deputy prime minister, is reappointed to head the economy portfolio, for signs of a return by Erdogan to more conventional econom-

ic policies. Inflation in Turkiye hit a staggering 85 per cent in October before easing to 44 per cent last month, according to official figures, although independent experts say the true rate is much higher. Critics blame the turmoil on Erdogan’s policy of keeping interest rates low to promote growth. Economists generally recommend raising rates to combat inflation. The Turkish lira has lost around 10 per cent of its value since the start of the year.

European summit opens in Moldova

AP ■ BULBOACA

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived at a sprawling summit of some 50 European leaders in Moldova on Thursday, becoming the focal point of an event that seeks to quell regional conflicts and shore up unity in the face of Russia’s war. The meeting of the European Political Community, a pan-continental gathering of heads of state and government from 47 countries, brings together leaders from European Union nations and others to the 27-member bloc’s south and east — a region pushed to a turning point in its relationship with Moscow by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine last year. The EU, represented at the summit by the bloc’s top diplomat, Josep Borrell, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Charles Michel, wants to use the summit to reach out to many Eastern European countries that spent decades either within the Soviet Union or under its immediate sphere of influence, and to bolster the conti-



Moldova's President Maia Sandu, right, greets Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni during arrivals for the European Political Community Summit at the Mimi Castle in Bulboaca, Moldova on Thursday. AP/PTI

nent’s unified response to Russian aggression. The choice to hold the summit in Moldova, a former Soviet republic of around 2.6 million people, is seen as a message to the Kremlin both from the EU and the pro-Western Moldovan government, which received EU candidate status in June of last year at the same time as Ukraine. Moldova, Europe’s poorest country which is cradled by Ukraine on three sides, aspires to join the EU by the end of the decade, and has consistently

signalled its support for Ukraine and taken in refugees fleeing the war. Speaking from the summit venue, a 19th-century castle and vineyard around 35 kilometers (21 miles) from the capital, Chisinau, Moldovan President Maia Sandu said a major aim of the summit was “restoring peace on the continent” and protecting democracy in Moldova and Ukraine from threats posed by Russia. “We need to reconfirm our support for Ukraine as it resists Russian

aggression,” she said. “Ukraine keeps Moldova safe today, and we are very, very grateful for that.” Zelenskyy, the first foreign leader to arrive at Thursday’s summit, entered an expansive courtyard of the castle in his trademark olive green shirt and cargo pants before meeting with Sandu on a red carpet. He thanked the Moldovan people for hosting Ukrainian refugees, and said both Ukraine and Moldova were destined to work “shoulder to shoulder” for EU membership. “What is very important: our future in the EU,” he said, adding that his country is ready to enter NATO whenever the Western military alliance is ready to accept it. “I think security guarantees are very important, not only for Ukraine, but for our neighbors, for Moldova, because of Russian aggression in Ukraine and potential aggression in other parts of Europe,” Zelenskyy said. Other summit participants include German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, French President Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

Amazon workers protest return-to-office mandate

Seattle (AP): Telling executives to “strive harder,” hundreds of corporate Amazon workers protested what they decried as the company’s lack of progress on climate goals and an inequitable return-to-office mandate during a lunchtime demonstration at its Seattle headquarters Wednesday. The protest came a week after Amazon’s annual shareholder meeting and a month after a policy took effect returning workers to the office three days per week. Previously, team leaders were allowed to determine how their charges worked. The employees chanted their disappointment with the pace of



the company’s efforts to reduce its carbon footprint — “Emissions climbing, time to act” — and urged Amazon to return authority to team leaders when it comes to work location. Wearing a black pirate hat and red coat, Church Hindley, a quality assurance engineer, said

working from home allowed him to live a better, healthier life. “I’m out here because I refuse to just sit idly by while mandates are dictated from above down that don’t make sense and hurt the planet, hurt families and individual lives,” Hindley said.

Technology radically changing sleep pattern

Loveborough: From sleep trackers to wakefulness drugs, the 21st century has seen an influx of new technology that could radically alter the way we sleep. Many of these new technologies chase the dream of optimised slumber. They promise to help tailor our sleep schedules to fit around our social lives, help us sleep for longer or even skip a night’s sleep altogether. Here’s how technology is permeating our sleep, and what the future holds. TIME TO WAKE UP Sleeping pills have recently been joined by a wave of wakefulness drugs, purportedly safer and more powerful alternatives to caffeine.



It seems that they work best on people who are already sleep deprived and don’t have a huge effect on those who are already well rested. Modafinil is touted for its cognition enhancing effects (especially in sleep-deprived people) and can supposedly keep people awake and alert for several days at a time. Some scientific studies are showing that

this may indeed be the case, although results are mixed, with other research showing the effects are similar to caffeine. The drug was developed to help people with narcolepsy but some have started using it for its focus-enhancing effects. It is a controlled drug (prescription only) in most countries. People who use it for cognitive enhancement or wakefulness are buying it on the black market or getting it from friends who have a prescription. Modafinil is popular with students — in 2020, Loughborough University researchers found that, of 506 students surveyed at 54 UK universities, 19% had taken cognitive enhancement sub-

stances. But people who take them for non-medical purposes are risking their health. Studies of the safety of these drugs do not consider this type of use. We don’t know what using these drugs to stay awake for long periods of time does to people’s bodies. But we do know that disrupting your sleep pattern (for example, shift work) is linked to health problems such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Recent studies suggest some people are combining sleep and wakefulness pills to manage their body rhythms and optimise their sleep or unwind after a day of hard work. The effects of taking wakefulness pills with other drugs is largely unknown. In the UK sale or supply of

a prescription-only or unlicensed medicine is a criminal offence. Whereas in the US, even possession of stimulants without a prescription is a crime. SMART SLEEP Many people already use smart watches, smart jewellery and fitness bands to track their sleep — for example, alarms that wake people up at the optimal point in their sleep cycle and motion sensor apps that analyse sleep patterns. New ways of tracking sleep could soon include donning a pair of pyjamas embedded with sensors to track changes in posture, and heart rate, whose algorithm creates a breathing pattern to mimic and help you fall asleep.

White House announces curbs in Sudan

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The White House announced on Thursday that it will levy sanctions against people “who are perpetuating the violence” in Sudan as warring sides fail to abide by a cease-fire agreement.

The United States is imposing visa restrictions on specific people in Sudan, including officials from the warring Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces and leaders from the former Omar al-Bashir regime, who are “responsible for, or complicit in, undermining Sudan’s democratic transition,” according to the State Department.

President Joe Biden on May 4 laid the groundwork for the sanctions when he issued an executive order that expanded US authorities to respond to the violence and help bring an end to the conflict.

“These measures are intended to hold accountable those responsible for undermining the peace, security, and stability of Sudan,” White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in a statement.

The Treasury Department said in a statement that four companies are being designated: Al Junaid Multi Activities Co. Ltd, which is controlled by

RSF Commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo and his brother, RSF Deputy Commander Abdul Rahim Dagalo; Tradive General Trading LLC, a front company controlled by RSF Major Algoney Hamdan Dagalo, who also is a brother of the RSF commander; Sudan’s largest defense company, Defense Industries System; and the arms company Sudan Master Technology, which is linked to the SAF.

“Through sanctions, we are cutting off key financial flows to both the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces, depriving them of resources needed to pay soldiers, rearm, resupply, and wage war in Sudan,” Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said. “The United States stands on the side of civilians against those who perpetuate violence towards the people of Sudan.”

The United States urged Sudan’s warring sides on Thursday to return to cease-fire talks and make a concerted effort to abide by a lasting truce after peace efforts collapsed yet again.

The appeal from the U.S. State Department came after Sudan’s military on Wednesday suspended its participation in the talks, hosted in Saudi Arabia, with a rival paramili-



tary force.

The fighting between the Sudanese military, led by Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces, commanded by Dagalo, broke out in mid-April. The violence has killed at least 866 civilians, according to a Sudanese doctors group, though the actual toll is likely much higher.

On Wednesday, heavy shelling near a market in a neighborhood in the south of the Sudanese capital of Khartoum killed at least 17 civilians, the Sudan Doctor’s Syndicate said. “The scope and scale of the bloodshed in

Khartoum and Darfur, in particular, is appalling,” Sullivan said. “And, the failure of the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces to abide by the cease-fire only further deepens our concern that the people of Sudan will once again face a protracted conflict and widespread suffering at the hands of the security forces.”

The Sudanese military’s withdrawal from the talks is a setback for Washington and Riyadh, which have been mediating between the two sides.

“Once the forces make clear by their actions that they are serious about complying

with the cease-fire, the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are prepared to resume facilitation of the suspended discussions,” the State Department said.

Washington and Riyadh brokered a cease-fire on May 21, to allow for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and restoration of vital services. There have been seven declared cease-fires since the conflict broke out and all have been violated.

Later Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters at a NATO foreign ministers meeting in Oslo, Norway, that both sides were continuing to violate the cease-fire agreement that was renewed last Monday.

“We will continue to be engaged. At the same time, we’re also looking at steps that we can take to make clear our views,” Blinken said.

In late May, Blinken threatened Sudan’s warring generals with possible sanctions in the event of cease-fire violations.

Last week, Riyadh and Washington accused the military of continuing to carry out airstrikes, while condemning the RSF for occupying people’s homes and seizing property. Theft was occurring in areas controlled by both forces, it added.

PTI president arrested

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party president Chaudhry Pervez Elahi, a close aide to former prime minister Imran Khan, was arrested outside his residence here on Thursday, the party said. “Shameful how the regime doesn’t stop their fascism. The inflation has skyrocketed to 38%, and their response is arresting former CM Punjab Parvez Elahi. Absolutely ridiculous!” the party tweeted along with a video in which the 77-year-old leader was seen being dragged by security personnel from his residence, Zahoore Elahi. The former Punjab chief minister was arrested as he was leaving his house, the Dawn newspaper reported, quoting Elahi’s spokesperson Iqbal Chaudhry.

The spokesperson alleged that authorities also “misbehaved” with women accompanying Elahi, who had been evading arrest since May 9.

On May 26, a district court in Lahore issued a non-bailable arrest warrant for Elahi.

“The pre-arrest bail of the accused was dismissed due to non-prosecution vide order dated May 25 and he is not appearing before the court and also not joining the investigation. In view of the request of the IO, let non-bailable arrest warrants of accused Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi be issued for June 2, 2023,” the court order read.

Elahi, who was a close aide to military dictator General Pervez Musharraf, was appointed as the president of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in March this year after quitting his former party - the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q).

On May 9, violent protests erupted after the arrest of Khan, Chairman of PTI, by paramilitary Rangers in Islamabad. His party workers vandalised over 20 military installations and government buildings, including the Lahore Corps Commander House, Mianwali airbase and the ISI building in Faisalabad. The Army headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi was also attacked by the mob for the first time.

‘Pakistan interested in another loan from IMF to revive economy’

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has expressed interest in securing a new loan from the IMF during his talks with its chief Kristalina Georgieva though there are slim chances for the revival of the ongoing bailout package from the global lender, a media report said on Thursday.

Sharif on last Saturday held a telephone conversation with the fund’s managing director and urged her to revive the USD 6.5 billion deal which was initially signed in 2019 and was set to expire by the end of this month.

However, the chances of revival are thin due to the limited time available to implement the tough conditions of the IMF, forcing Pakistan to look for a new deal to meet multiple economic challenges.

Prime Minister Sharif had revealed Pakistan’s intentions to sign a follow-up bailout package during his telephonic conversation with the IMF

Khan was later released on bail. The violence elicited a strong reaction from the government and military with vows of taking action against the culprits, leading to an ongoing crackdown against those involved.

Law enforcement agencies have arrested over 10,000 workers of Khan’s Pakistan party across Pakistan, 4,000 of them from Punjab province. Following the May 9 incidents, several senior leaders of Khan’s party were taken into custody. The leaders included Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Fawad Chaudhry, Asad Umar, Dr Yasmeen Rashid, Shireen Mazari, Maleeka Bukhari, and Fayyazul Hassan Chauhan.

A few days later, many prominent leaders including Fawad, Imran Ismail, Shireen Mazari, Fayyazul Hassan

head, The Express Tribune newspaper quoted sources as saying. The sources said the IMF chief reciprocated the premier’s views about the need for another package. Diplomatic corps and international financial institutions think that Pakistan cannot avoid default without securing a new IMF package.

In order to repay USD 25 billion debt in the next fiscal year, Pakistan must have an IMF umbrella, the report said.

The Ministry of Finance is also of the view that the follow-up programme is needed to reinforce and build upon the reforms initiated during the current programme, a senior official of the ministry said on the condition of anonymity. However, the prime minister’s latest initiative seeking a new deal runs counter to Finance Minister Ishaq Dar’s stance who, not long ago, had propagated the idea that Pakistan should stop living off the IMF.

Debt ceiling deal goes to Senate



House Speaker Kevin McCarthy of Calif along with other Republican members of the House, speaks at a news conference after the House passed the debt ceiling bill at the Capitol in Washington

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Veering away from a default crisis, the House overwhelmingly approved a debt ceiling and budget cuts package, sending the deal that President Joe Biden and Speaker Kevin McCarthy negotiated to the Senate for swift passage in a matter of days, before a fast-approaching deadline. The hard-fought compromise pleased few, but lawmakers assessed it was better than the alternative — a devastating economic upheaval if Congress failed to act. Tensions ran high as hard-right Republicans refused the deal, but Biden and McCarthy assembled a bipartisan coalition to push to passage on a robust 314-117 vote late Wednesday. “We did pretty dang good,” McCarthy, R-Calif, said afterward.

Amid deep discontent from Republicans who said the spending restrictions did not go far enough, McCarthy said it is only a “first step”. Biden, watching the tally from Colorado Springs where Thursday he is scheduled to deliver the commencement address at the US Air Force Academy, phoned McCarthy and the other congressional leaders after the vote. In a statement, he called the outcome “good news for the American people and the American economy”. Washington is rushing after a long slog of debate to

wrap up work on the package to ensure the government can keep paying its bills, and prevent financial upheaval at home and abroad. Next Monday is when the Treasury has said the US would run short of money and risk a dangerous default.

Biden had been calling lawmakers directly to shore up backing. McCarthy worked to sell sceptical fellow Republicans, even fending off challenges to his leadership. A similar bipartisan effort from Democrats and Republicans will be needed in the Senate to overcome objections.

Overall, the 99-page bill would make some inroads in curbing the nation’s deficits as Republicans demanded, without rolling back Trump-era tax breaks as Biden wanted. To pass it, Biden and McCarthy counted on support from the political centre, a rarity in divided Washington.

A compromise, the package restricts spending for the next two years, suspends the debt ceiling into January 2025 and changes some policies, including imposing new work requirements for older Americans receiving food aid and green-lighting an Appalachian natural gas line that many Democrats oppose. It bolsters funds for defence and veterans, and guts new money for Internal Revenue Service agents.

China to set up secure def communications link with S’pore

Singapore (PTI): Singapore and China on Thursday agreed to work towards establishing a secure defence telephone link between the two countries to allow high-level communications between the defence leaders, amidst Beijing’s aggressive actions in the strategic Indo-Pacific region.

Under a memorandum of understanding signed here, the defence establishments in both countries will work towards setting up a secure line for high-level communications between their respective defence leaders, Singapore’s Ministry of Defence (Mindef) said in a statement.

Such high-level open lines of communication are important for strengthening mutual understanding and trust, it said. The MOU signing was witnessed by Singapore’s Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen and China’s Defence Minister Gen. Li Shangfu, who is visiting Singapore for the first time.

Gen Li is here from Thursday to Sunday and will attend the Shangri-La Dialogue, an annual defence summit, which is being held from Friday to Sunday. As part of his visit, Gen Li co-chaired the second Singapore-China Defence Ministers’ Dialogue (DMD) with Dr Ng on Thursday. Both the Defence Ministers’ Dialogue and the MOU are initiatives under the enhanced Agreement on Defence Exchanges and Security Cooperation signed in 2019. The Shangri-La Dialogue is run by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).

At the Shangri-La Dialogue, those attending typically debate the region’s security challenges, engage in bilateral talks, and come up with fresh approaches together at the dialogue, said the IISS on its website.

China criticises US plan for trade deal with Taiwan

Beijing (AP): China’s government criticised the United States’ plans to sign a trade treaty with Taiwan and called on Washington on Thursday to stop official contact with the self-ruled island democracy claimed by Beijing as part of its territory. The agreement due to be signed on Thursday comes amid increased Chinese efforts to intimidate Taiwan by flying fighter jets and bombers near the island, a global centre for high-tech industry. American and European politicians have visited Taiwan in a show of support for its elected government.

The Chinese foreign ministry accused Washington of violating agreements on the status of Taiwan, which split with the mainland in 1949 after a civil war. The United States has no official relations with Taiwan but has extensive informal ties and multibillion-dollar annual trade. “The United States should stop any form of official exchanges with Taiwan, refrain from negotiating agreements with Taiwan that have sovereign connotations or official nature and refrain from sending wrong signals to the Taiwan independence secessionist forces,” said a ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning.

US defence chief calls China’s refusal to meet unfortunate

AP ■ TOKYO

US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin stressed the importance of communication during a stopover Thursday in Tokyo, calling it unfortunate that his Chinese counterpart is refusing to meet him at an upcoming annual security conference in Singapore, which both men are attending.

On the way to the annual Shangri-La Dialogue Asian security summit this weekend, Austin held talks with Japanese Defence Minister Yasukazu Hamada. Noting China’s increasingly assertive military actions in international airspace and waterways in the region, he told a joint news conference in Tokyo, “The provocative intercepts of our aircraft and also our allies’ aircraft, that’s very concerning, and we would hope that they would alter their action.”

The United States military said Tuesday that a Chinese fighter jet flew aggressively close to a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft over the South China

Sea, forcing the American pilot to fly through the turbulent wake.

“I’m concerned about at some point having an incident that could very, very quickly spiral out of control,” Austin said. “I would welcome any opportunity to engage with leadership. I think defence departments should be talking to each other on a routine basis or should have open channels for communication.”

Although Beijing said there will be no meeting between Austin and his Chinese counterpart at the security summit, Hamada is expected to attend and meet with Chinese Minister of National Defence Li Shangfu on the sidelines.

Japan and China set up a defence hotline in March to improve communication and avoid accidental encounters in the tense region, and Hamada and Li recently held their first telephone talks on the hotline.

Washington and Beijing have yet to hold such a talk, and when Austin phoned their crisis line in February, the call

went unanswered.

“We need to strengthen our cooperation of Japan-US, and Japan-US-South Korea,” Hamada said Thursday. The two criticized North Korea’s failed rocket launch Wednesday for using ballistic missile technology that’s prohibited under United Nations’ Security Council resolutions, and affirmed further cooperation between them and with South Korea in case of another launch attempt.

Ties between Japan and South Korea have improved rapidly in recent months under Washington’s pressure in the face of growing regional threats from China, North Korea and Russia. Tokyo and Seoul are also discussing real-time sharing of North Korea’s missile launch data.

Austin said the United States stands with Japan and South Korea in the face of Pyongyang’s provocations and that “the United States will take all necessary measures to secure to ensure the security of our homeland in the defence of our allies.”

Jordan’s crown prince weds scion of Saudi family

AP ■ AMMAN

Jordan’s crown prince married the scion of a prominent Saudi family on Thursday in a palace celebration attended by royals and other VIPs from around the world as massive crowds gathered in a mood of excitement across the kingdom.

The marriage of Crown Prince Hussein, 28, and Saudi architect Rajwa Alseif, 29, drew a star-studded guest list headlined by Britain’s Prince William and his wife Kate and which also included U.S. First Lady Jill Biden.

The celebrations hold deep significance for the region, emphasizing continuity in an Arab state prized for its long-standing stability and refreshing the monarchy’s image after a palace feud. It even could help resource-poor Jordan forge a strategic bond with its oil-rich neighbor, Saudi Arabia.

The bride, wearing an elegant white dress, arrived at Zahran Palace in a 1968 Rolls-Royce Phantom V custom-made for the crown prince’s late great grandmother. The crown prince arrived earlier in full ceremonial military uniform with a gold-hilted saber.

The families and their guests gathered in an open-air gazebo surrounded by landscaped gardens for a traditional Muslim wedding ceremony known as “katb al-ketab.” The crowd erupted in applause after the signing of the marriage contract.

Several miles away, a jolt went through a crowd gathered at an ancient Roman amphitheater as they watched the couple seal their vows and exchange rings on a wide screen set up for the occasion. After several minutes of stillness, thousands were on their feet, waving flags and shrieking with excitement at one of sev-



eral viewing parties held across the nation.

Samara Aqrabawi, a 55-year-old mother watching the livestream with her young daughter, said the ceremony was more impressive than she imagined. “I wish for all mothers and fathers in Jordan and in the world to feel like they’re surely feeling,” she said of the king and queen.

“This is an important day because he is our future king,” said Ahmad al-Masri, an 18-year-old attending with his family. “All of Jordan is watching.”

On Thursday morning, Saudi wedding guests and tourists — the men wearing white dishdashas robes and the women in brightly colored abayas — filtered through the

sleek marbled lobby of the Four Seasons Hotel in Amman. Noura Al Sudairi, an aunt of the bride, was wearing sweatpants and sneakers on her way to breakfast.

“We are all so excited, so happy about this union,” she said. “Of course it’s a beautiful thing for our families, and for the relationship between Jordan and Saudi Arabia.”

Excitement over the nuptials — Jordan’s biggest royal event in years — has been building in the capital of Amman, where congratulatory banners of Hussein and his beaming bride adorn buses and hang over winding hillside streets. Shops had competing displays of royal regalia. Royal watchers speculated about which dress designer Alseif would select— still an official secret. “She looks like such a princess that I think she deserves him,” Suhair Afaneh, a 37-year-old businesswoman,

said of the bride, lingering in front of a portrait of Hussein in a dark suit. “But so what, I’ll still be in love with him.”

She contemplated buying Hussein’s portrait to hang in her bedroom but her nieces persuaded her that her husband might not approve.

Jordan’s 11 million citizens have watched the young crown prince rise in prominence in recent years, as he increasingly joined his father, Abdullah, in public appearances. Hussein has graduated from Georgetown University, joined the military and gained some global recognition speaking at the U.N. General Assembly. His wedding, experts say, marks his next crucial rite of passage.

“It’s not just a marriage, it’s the presentation of the future king of Jordan,” said political analyst Amer Sabailah. “The issue of the crown prince has been closed.”

LOST & FOUND

Notice is hereby given that the Foreign Inward Remittance Certificate (FIRC) numbered 115421TT0002293 dated 18.11.2011 issued by Karnataka Bank limited has been misplaced and is not traceable. Lost document report was filed vide LR No. 501993/2023 on 31.05.2023. The Company is applying for a duplicate FIRC certificate. If found, please send it to 1011-B, 10th Floor, Indraprastha Building 21, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi-110001.


For SPAL Automotive Technologies India Private Limited (Formerly known as "Pee Aar Exim Private Limited")

(Sd./) **Rahul Hanmant Gropadhyay**
Place : New Delhi Managing Director
Date : 01.06.2023 DIN : 09523131

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all concerned that the original DDA POSSESSION LETTER NOC FOR WATER AND ELECTRIC CONNECTION AND SITE POSSESSION AND CORRESPONDENCE WITH DDA in respect of DDA Janta Flat No. L-18H, Pkt. L Sheikh Sarai Phase II, New Delhi, has been misplaced and is not traceable, and a report in this regard has also been filed online PS : Crime Branch, Delhi having LR No. 502473/2023.

Any person, Bank, Company, Financial Institution, Firm, Society, Government Sema - Government Organization, legal entity etc., knowing the whereabouts or having in their possession the above mentioned documents may inform Manohar K Vasandani at DDA Janta Flat No. L-18H, Sheikh Sarai Phase II, New Delhi, or my email address : vasandanimanohar7@gmail.com or my phone no at New Delhi, within 20 days of publication of this Public Notice.



PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LTD.
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Corporate Identification No. U40109PB2010SGC033813
website: www.pspcl.in (Contact No. 96461-20640)

Tender Enquiry No. 1532/CHPCS&HHMMC/O&M/PC-2379 Dated: 01-06-2023

Chief Engineer/ O&M (P&P Cell), GHPT, Lehra Mohabbat, invites E-tender for the Procurement of Steel Section items, Quantity as per NIT. For detailed NIT and tender specification, please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 01-06-2023 from 17:00 Hrs. onwards.

Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

76155/12/1729/2023/24584

GHTP-34/23
Dated CHD - 6/1/2023

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY
KANKE, RANCHI-834006, JHARKHAND

Corrigendum

In continuation of the notice published in the various newspapers on 26.05.2023, it is to mention that, instead of walk-in-interview only on dated 14.06.2023 for the post of Clinical Psychology Tutor & Psychiatric Social Work Tutor, the selection process will be done on the basis of written exam (MCQ Based) to be held on 13.06.2023 from 11.30 A.M. onwards followed by Department Assessment on 14.06.2023 from 11.30 A.M. onwards. Details can be seen on the Institute website www.cipranchi.nic.in.

Sd/-Director

Sanjay Seth
Whole Time Director
DIN : 00350518

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Ph : 011-47087300, 23930655. E-MAIL ID : mymoneyviews@outlook.com						
Extract of the Standalone Audited Financial Results for the Quarter and year ended 31st March, 2023 (Rs. in lacs)						
S. No	Particulars	Quarter Ended 31.03.2022 Audited	Quarter Ended 31.12.2022 Unaudited	Quarter Ended 31.03.2022 Audited	Year Ended 31.03.2022 Audited	Year Ended 31.03.2022 Audited
1	Total income from operations (net)	38.06	17.73	27.67	101.51	206.23
2	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period (Before Tax and after exceptional items)	16.11	(4.79)	(4.72)	12.07	100.72
3	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period after tax (after Extraordinary items)	30.38	(4.79)	4.21	26.34	93.15
4	Total comprehensive income for the period (comprising profit/(loss) for the period after tax and other comprehensive income after tax)	30.38	(4.79)	4.21	26.34	93.15
5	Equity Share Capital	1630.03	1440.03	1440.03	1630.03	1440.03
6	Earning per share (before extraordinary items) (of Rs. 10/- each)	0.186	(0.033)	0.029	0.162	0.647
	Basic Diluted	0.184	(0.029)	0.025	0.157	0.554
7	Earning per share (after extraordinary items) (of Rs. 10/- each)	0.186	(0.033)	0.029	0.162	0.647
	Basic Diluted	0.184	(0.029)	0.025	0.157	0.554
Note : The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly/Annual Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly/Annual Financial Results are available on the Stock Exchange websites (www.bseindia.com) and company website www.mymoneyviews.com For and on behalf of the Board of Directors						
Place : Delhi		Sd/-				
Dated : 30/05/2023		Sanjay Seth Whole Time Director DIN : 00350518				

GST mop-up crosses ₹1.5 lakh crore for third month in a row

Up 12% in May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

GST collections crossed Rs 1.50 lakh crore for the third month in a row, recording a 12 per cent increase in May at over Rs 1.57 lakh crore, according to the official data released on Thursday.

The collections, tax experts said, reflects a continuation of the good economic performance across states witnessed since last year.

The gross Good & Services Tax (GST) revenue collected in the month of May, 2023 is Rs 1,57,090 crore of which Central GST is Rs 28,411 crore, State GST is Rs 35,828 crore, Integrated GST is Rs 81,363 crore (including Rs 41,772 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is Rs 11,489 crore (including Rs 1,057 crore collected on import of goods), a finance ministry statement said.

"The revenues for the month of May 2023 are 12 per



cent higher than the GST revenues in the same month last year," the ministry said.

During the month, revenue from import of goods was 12 per cent higher and the revenues from domestic transactions (including import of services) are 11 per cent higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month

last year.

May is the third month in a row that tax collections from goods sold and services rendered have crossed Rs 1.50 lakh crore. In April GST revenues had touched a record high of Rs 1.87 lakh crore, while in March it was Rs 1.60 lakh crore.

May is the 14th month in

a row when monthly GST revenues came in more than Rs 1.4 lakh crore. Collections have crossed the Rs 1.5 lakh crore-mark for the 5th time since the implementation of GST on July 1, 2017.

KPMG in India National Head (Indirect Taxes) Abhishek Jain said the GST collection matches with the government

budget estimates for this fiscal.

"With extensive department GST audits lined up before September 2023, these figures may likely go up from here in the months to come," Jain added.

Deloitte India Partner M S Mani said these collections, while being lower than the previous year-end month, pertain to supply transactions undertaken in April.

"While the collections in absolute terms are lower than the previous month -- which had an embedded year-end impact -- it reflects a continuation of the inherently good economic performance across states witnessed since last year," Mani added.

ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said GST revenues in May 2023 have modestly exceeded expectations.

"Over the next few months, we expect GST revenues to print at Rs 1.55-1.65 trillion and record an expansion of 10-11 per cent in YoY terms, broadly in line with the nominal GDP growth expected in FY2024," Nayar said.

EY Tax Partner Saurabh Agarwal said GST collection figures for May 2023 further strengthen the belief in India's macroeconomic stability and continued growth momentum as we see a 12 per cent YoY growth.

"While the figures are comparatively moderate as compared to collections of April, however that's primarily on account of last fiscal year closure activities getting accumulated and accounted for in the collections of last month," Agarwal said.

Tax Connect Advisory Partner Vivek Jalan said the budget 2023 has projected an uptick of 12 per cent in GST collections in FY23-24 vis-a-vis last financial year.

Although GST from import of goods and services has shown a growth of 12 per cent this month vis-a-vis last month, the collection from domestic transactions has shown a growth of 11 per cent which is below the budget expectations, which maybe a point for the GST Council to ponder upon, Jalan added.



Sebi to auction properties of 7 business groups

On June 28 to recover investors' money

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Thursday said it will auction 17 properties belonging to seven business groups including MPS Group, Tower Infotech, and Vibgyor Group on June 28, with a total reserve price of Rs 51 crore, in a bid to recover investors' money.

Apart from these, the regulator has put on block properties of Prayag Group, Multipurpose BIOS India Group, Waris Finance International Group and Pailan Group of companies, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a notice.

The 17 properties being auctioned include land parcels, storied buildings, flats, and a commercial space situated across West Bengal.

Inviting bids, Sebi said auction of the properties will be conducted through online mode between 11 am and 1 pm. Further, total reserve price has been pegged at Rs 51 crore for the assets and Quikr Realty has been engaged by Sebi to assist in the sale of these properties.

Of the total properties to be auctioned, five belong to MPS Group, four relate to Vibgyor, three pertain to Pailan Group of companies, two belong to Tower Infotech and one each to Multipurpose BIOS India Group, Prayag Group and Waris Finance.

The regulator said the bid-

ders should make their own independent enquiries regarding encumbrances, title of properties put on action and claims, among others prior to submitting their bids.

These firms had raised funds from investors without complying with regulatory norms, which prompted Sebi to take action.

Earlier, the regulator had attached some of their properties after directives asking them to refund investors' money along with interest did not materialise. In these matters, the markets regulator had also attached demat and bank accounts.

Going by the Sebi orders, MPS Group of companies includes MPS Greenery Developers that collected Rs 1,520 crore from investors through illegal Collective Investment Schemes (CIS).

Prayag Infotech had made an offer of redeemable preference shares between 2007-2008 and 2011-12 and mobilised at least Rs 131.37 crore from over 1.57 lakh investors.

Vibgyor Allied Infrastructure had issued optionally fully convertible debentures to 49,562 investors in 2009 and raised Rs 61.76 crore.

Tower Infotech had raised nearly Rs 46 crore from more than 49,000 investors through issuance of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) and redeemable preference shares between 2005 and 2010.



Markets extend losses for 2nd day in highly volatile trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower in highly volatile trade on Thursday due to selling in banking, metal and energy counters amid a mixed trend in the global markets.

Falling for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 193.70 points or 0.31 per cent to settle at 62,428.54 even after a positive beginning. During the day, it fell 263.1 points or 0.42 per cent to 62,359.14.

The NSE Nifty fell 46.65 points or 0.25 per cent to finish at 18,487.75.

"Despite challenges in the global economies, the domestic market displayed better than estimated Q4 earnings growth, along with 7.2 per cent GDP growth in FY23, adding buoyancy to the market during the week.

"However, today the market closed with a marginal negative bias in which banks witnessed heavy profit-booking. Investors turned cautious in anticipation of inflationary pressure in the US after raising the US debt ceiling," said

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

From the Sensex pack, Bharti Airtel fell 3.42 and Kotak Mahindra Bank declined 3.31 per cent. ICICI Bank, ITC, HDFC Bank, UltraTech Cement, HCL Technologies and Maruti were the other major laggards.

Tata Motors, Hindustan Unilever, Asian Paints, Sun Pharma, Nestle, Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro, Bajaj Finance, Axis Bank and IndusInd Bank were among the gainers.

Meanwhile, S&P Global Ratings said Reliance Industries Ltd's operating performance is likely to remain resilient over the next two years, as the firm's growing presence in the digital and retail segments will temper softer earnings in the energy business.

Reliance shares fell 0.51 per cent to close at Rs 2,462.05 apiece on BSE.

Institutional investors lapped up Coal India's share in the maiden government's stake sale this fiscal, with Rs 6,500 crore bids pouring in on the first day of the offer for sale.

Coal India output grows 9.5% to record 60 MT in May; offtake rises 4% to 63.7 MT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) has reported a 9.5 per cent year-on-year rise in monthly production to a record 60 million tonne (MT) in May 2023. The miner, along with its subsidiaries, had produced 54.7 MT of coal in the same month last year, CIL said in a statement on Thursday.

"CIL's May 2023 production rose to a record 60 MT, logging 9.5 per cent growth over the same month last year with an increase of 5.2 MT. Considering the production for May generally hovers in the range of 40-



48 MT, the CIL output surge in the current fiscal's May was substantial. All the subsidiaries have listed positive growth," the statement said.

Progressive production in April-May 2023 was 117.5 MT, 8.6 per cent higher from 108.2 MT in the year-ago period.

Rising risk appetite may affect some banks' intrinsic credit profiles: Fitch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A rise in risk appetite among Indian banks highlights the importance of assessing individual banks' ability to withstand expected and unexpected balance-sheet stress as part of the analysis of their intrinsic credit-worthiness, said Fitch Ratings in a report.

Banks' loan growth over the financial year ended March 2023 (FY23) reached 15.4 per cent, the highest since FY12.

"We believe, this partly reflected pent-up credit demand following the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as strong nominal GDP growth, and we expect some normalisation in FY24," the global rating agency said on Thursday.



However, rapid loan growth and higher exposure to certain asset classes are also likely to indicate greater risk appetite and could affect risk profiles, it said, adding increasing risk appetite reflects in part banks' efforts to boost returns after funding costs rose over 2022, even as they manage asset growth relative to capital.

Notably, credit card lending and personal loans exposure rose to 10.2 per cent of system loans by FY23, from 7.5 per cent

in FY18, it said.

"We view such unsecured categories as most vulnerable to potential stress, though exposures among our rated entities remain manageable, and improvements in risk controls and loan-book granularity should help to reduce risks associated with any future asset-quality deterioration relative to previous cycles. We also expect tighter regulatory supervision to slow unsecured lending in the year ahead," it said.

Shareholders to take call on listing: Future Generali India MD

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Future Generali India Insurance has been profitable since 2014 but the decision to list the company on exchanges would be taken by shareholders, managing director Anup Rau said on Thursday.

Future Generali India Insurance Company Limited is a joint venture between the Generali Group with a majority 74 per cent stake, and remaining with the Future Group.

India continues to be most attractive market for insurance players and premium for general insurance segment is expected to grow at 20 per cent in the next few years, he said.

Meanwhile, private general insurer announced the launch of its new health insurance product - DIY Health - which offers flexibility and freedom to choose the coverage as per the customers' needs.

This comprehensive product celebrates the power of choice, offering a base plan with 17 base features, complemented with a wide array of 20 modular features.

This modular health insurance product would enable customers to not only choose the most relevant features as per their life needs but also enables them to further tweak or modify the policies annually, ensuring their health insurance remains as unique and special as they are, he said.



TCS, Reliance, Jio top best Indian brands 2023 ranking

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Technology giant TCS and India's most valuable company Reliance Industries have topped the list of the country's most valuable brands, according to Interbrand, the renowned global brand consultancy. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) topped the 2023 50 Most Valuable Indian Brands list with a brand value of Rs 1.09 lakh crore.

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd is at No.2 spot with a brand value of Rs 65,320 crore. His group's telecom and digital unit Jio is also in the top 5 with a brand value of Rs 49,027 crore. "Celebrating its 10th year, the Best Indian Brands report has become a definitive guide to the nation's brand landscape since its inaugural publication in 2014," Interbrand said.

This year's edition showcases remarkable growth, with a total list value of Rs 8.3 lakh crore (USD 100 billion), marking a significant 167 per cent increase over the past decade. This is the first time the total value of the table has surpassed the USD 100 billion mark.

Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO - India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa at CBRE, said, "As we look ahead, the intersection of real estate and the EV sector presents exciting opportunities and challenges.

BUSINESS BRIEF

RDSS FOR NDMC APPROVED

NEW DELHI: Ministry of Power (MoP) has approved Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) for the NDMC area of New Delhi with a project cost of Rs 337 cr. The agreement was signed by Saurav Shah, ED-PFC and Dr. Ankita Chakravartty, Secretary, NDMC in the presence of senior officials of both PFC and NDMC.

NFL RECORDS HIGHEST-EVER PROFIT

NOIDA: National Fertilizers Limited (NFL) has achieved its best-ever operational performance by setting new records of Production, Sales, Turnover and Profit during the financial year 2022-23. The results of Company for the Financial Year ended March 31, 2023 were approved by the Board in its meeting on May 29, 2023.

PREVENTIVE VIGILANCE WORKSHOP HELD

NEW DELHI: A three-day Workshop on Preventive Vigilance was conducted at Mussoorie from May 24-26 for E2-E7 Level. The participants were from NRTS-I, NRTS-II and NR-III. The Workshop was inaugurated in a traditional manner by Dharmendra Kumar Madan, CVO, POWERGRID by lighting the Lamp. V K Singh, Director (Personnel), A K Mishra, ED (NR-1) and others were present.

DHILLON, CMD, PFC BAGS AWARD

NEW DELHI: Ravinder Singh Dhillon, Chairman & Managing Director of Power Finance Corporation Ltd (PFC), a Maharatna Company and India's leading NBFC in the power sector, was conferred with the prestigious "SKOCH INDIA ECONOMIC FORUM AWARD" in recognition of his stellar leadership, path-breaking energy transition initiatives, remarkable achievements and contribution to the accelerated development of the Power Sector.

POWERGRID DISTRIBUTES COTTON BAGS

NEW DELHI: As a part of Swachhhta Pakhwada action plan, and to contribute towards Swachh Bharat Mission launched by Prime Minister, POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED (POWERGRID) distributed cotton bags to the general public at Bahu Plaza, Jammu on May 31, 2023.

Gold falls by ₹150 to ₹60,250; silver jumps ₹150

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices eased Rs 150 to Rs 60,250 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid a fall in yellow metal price overseas, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had ended at Rs 60,400 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

Silver, however, jumped Rs 150 to Rs 72,900 per kg.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at Rs 60,250/10 grams, down Rs 150 per 10 grams," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international markets, gold was quoting lower



at USD 1,955 per ounce, while silver was marginally up at USD 23.27 per ounce.

Comex gold prices edged lower in Asian trading hours on Thursday as the dollar and bond yields rebounded from lows in Wednesday's session, Sriram Iyer, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities, said.

Rupee rises 33 paise to close at 82.42 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated by 33 paise to close at 82.42 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, as positive macroeconomic data strengthened investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.54 against the US dollar and settled at 82.42 (provisional), up 33 paise over its previous close amid sustained foreign fund inflows.

During the day, the domestic unit witnessed an intra-day high of 82.36 and a low of 82.54.

On Wednesday, the rupee closed at 82.75 against the US currency.



The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.20 per cent to 104.12. Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures advanced 0.17 per cent to USD 72.72 per

barrel.

"The Indian rupee strengthened amid stellar economic data and foreign fund inflows. It has clocked the best single-day gain in almost two months following dollar inflows and lower commodity prices," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities said.

Foreign institutions bought USD 4.5 billion of domestic stocks in May, the most since November.

Though the spot USDINR fell on Thursday, technical is signalling a continuation of the bullish trend, Parmar said, adding that looking ahead, traders will eye on Friday's US payrolls data ahead of the Federal Reserve's June meeting.

E-vehicle makers require 13 mn sq ft real estate space by 2030

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Electric vehicle manufacturers will need around 13 million square feet of real estate space by 2030 to make targeted 23 million units of two-wheelers and 4 million units of four-wheelers, according to CBRE.

Real estate consultant

CBRE South Asia released a report, 'Electric Vehicles in India - New Wheels on the Roads,' on Thursday that focuses on the trends, growth, and influence of electric vehicles (EVs) on the real estate sector in India.

"Real estate requirements of manufacturing facilities of 4-wheeler and 2-wheeler (4W

and 2W) electric vehicles is estimated to be around 13 million square feet by 2030 as a result of the government's EV adoption targets," it said.

Moreover, EV battery manufacturing facilities would require 2,400 acre of land to accommodate the production of 200 GWh of batteries by 2030.

By 2030, this real estate requirement will allow a production capacity of about 4 million units of 4Ws and 23 million units of 2Ws.

The Indian EV market is expected to grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 49 per cent between 2021-2030 and cross annual sales of 17 million

units by 2030. The consultant noted Built-to-Suit (BTS) and leased facilities are largely preferred by EV manufacturers at present due to ease of capital deployment, flexibility in lease terms, speed to market and location advantages. However, an owned facility provides more scope for customisation, save monthly rental outgoings

and has better prospects for land price appreciation, it added.

Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO - India, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa at CBRE, said, "As we look ahead, the intersection of real estate and the EV sector presents exciting opportunities and challenges.

SEVILLA END SEASON WITH EUROPA LEAGUE TITLE

AP ■ MADRID

It was the usual ending for Sevilla in an unusual season for the Spanish soccer club. Sevilla won the Europa League trophy yet again on Thursday after a season in which it went through coaching changes and had to fight just to avoid relegation in the Spanish league.

The team's struggles were quickly forgotten with its victory on penalties over Roma in the Europa League final on Wednesday in Budapest, which gave the club a record seventh title in the second-tier European competition.

What looked like a season to forget turned into triumph after another impressive campaign by the Spanish club in the competition where it has been dominant in recent years. Five of its titles came within the last 10



years — 2014-16, 2020 and 2023.

This time, Sevilla eliminated European powerhouses Manchester United in the quarterfinals and Juventus in the

semifinals. It had gotten past Fenerbahce and PSV Eindhoven in previous rounds.

On Wednesday, the team beat José Mourinho-coached Roma 4-1 in a penalty shootout

after a 1-1 draw.

Sevilla's turnaround this season came after the club decided to replace Jorge Sampaoli with José Luis Mendilibar in March. Before Mendilibar arrived, the

team had won only twice in eight games in all competitions, with five losses. Since he took over, Sevilla lost only twice in 16 games.

"I'm happy to be here, to have won for the club, which was having a hard time when we got here," Mendilibar said. "We have done something good that can have repercussions for the good of the club."

The coach who had spent a large part of his career with Eibar came on a contract until the end of the season but was expected to stay with Sevilla following his successful stint.

"He transformed us," said Sevilla defender Jesús Navas, the only player from the current squad who was with the club when it won the Europa League title for the first time in 2006. "He got the best out of us and the result is there. He deserves to be with this club for a long time."

Sampaoli had taken over for Julen Lopetegui after the team's unusually poor start to the season. Sevilla had finished fourth in the league the last three seasons, only behind powerhouses Real Madrid, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid.

This time it is sitting in 11th place entering its final match at Real Sociedad on Sunday, and will only make it to the Champions League again next season thanks to its Europa League title.

Sevilla made it to the Champions League quarterfinals in 2018, but since then had only once advanced past the group stage.

Having to play in the second-tier Europa League has certainly turned out OK for Sevilla, though, and on Thursday it will be parading to celebrate yet another European title with its fans.



Neville backs City

AP ■ MANCHESTER

As a part of Manchester United's treble-winning team of 1999, Gary Neville admits he is in fear ahead of Saturday's FA Cup final.

United is the only team to win the three major trophies in a single English soccer season — the Premier League title, Champions League and FA Cup.

Now Manchester City is in contention to replicate that feat, having already secured the league title.

City has the chance to win its second trophy this season when it faces United in the FA Cup final at Wembley Stadium, which would set up a possible treble when the team coached by Pep Guardiola meets Inter Milan in the Champions League final in Istanbul on June 10.

"I do fear it is on the cards," Neville told The Associated Press. "City have not got there yet, but they look like they are on the way, on the path. They've got a great manager, they've got great players, but they've still got to get over the line. Anything can happen and we just pray and (have our) fingers crossed. It doesn't bear thinking about."

City has overtaken United as English soccer's dominant team over the past decade and has just won its fifth league title in six years. But the club has yet to match United's greatest ever achievement, and has yet to ever win the European title.

And now United has the chance to end its rival's trophy pursuit at Wembley on Saturday.

United manager Erik ten Hag has enjoyed an impressive first season in charge, having led United to success in the League Cup in February, as well securing a return to the Champions League next season. But Neville still considers City the favorite in the final.

"I think they will almost be disappointed now if they don't win it (the treble)," Neville said. "They'll be expected to win every game. The Cup final might present an issue or two, it is Manchester United, but they are far better than the teams they've got left to play."

City put together an unstoppable run to win the title and has blown away some of the best teams at home and abroad in its charge toward the treble. Liverpool and Arsenal were beaten 4-1 and Real Madrid lost 4-0 at Etihad Stadium in the Champions League semifinals.

Former City women's player Jill Scott believes City will be too strong for United.

"I went to the Arsenal game and it could have been 7-0," she told the AP. "The football they played was incredible."

"I can't see City not coming away with that FA Cup win. Sometimes in a one-off game anything can happen, but I just think they will be far superior."

United looking to stop treble-chasing City

AP ■ LONDON

The roars grew louder inside Old Trafford as Erik ten Hag addressed Manchester United fans from the middle of the field, reminding them of the role they have in protecting the club's greatest ever achievement.

There was one game to go this season, the United manager told the baying crowd, and his players standing right in front of him were ready to give their all to beat Manchester City in the FA Cup final at Wembley Stadium.

"We count on you as well," he said, pointing to the supporters, who by now were punching the air in defiance. "They will give everything when you are at our backs, and I'm sure we've a really good chance to take the cup back to Old Trafford."

As rallying cries go, it was pretty much pitch perfect from Ten Hag, who knows exactly what's at stake on Saturday in a local derby with widespread repercussions.

For United, this is about much more than capturing a second trophy of the season — after the English League Cup in February that ended the club's six-year title drought — to cap an encouraging first season under Ten Hag. It's also about preserving United's proud status as the only English team to have won the league-FA Cup-European Cup treble in the same season.

City, after all, is two wins from emulating that feat, having already clinched the Premier League title and booked its place in the Champions League final against Inter Milan in Istanbul on June 10.

That United can ruin City's treble bid adds more spice to the first cup final between the rivals, which is taking place about 170 miles (270 kilometers) south of Manchester.

City starts as the undoubted favorite on the back of its stunning form since February that reeled in long-time leader Arsenal in the Premier League race and saw Bayern Munich



and Real Madrid swept aside in the Champions League knockout stage.

Before a much-weakened team — featuring a bunch of youth players — lost at Brentford 1-0 in a league match with little riding on it last Sunday, City went on a 25-match unbeaten run in all competitions and won 20 of them. Along the way, Madrid was beaten 4-0, Bayern 3-0 and Arsenal 4-1. Back in October, City thrashed United 6-3.

All those games were at home, though, and City hasn't been quite so machine-like on the road. And that's not the only source of hope for United, which is seeking its 13th FA Cup title — with only Arsenal (14) having more.

City manager Pep Guardiola talks often of his players having "rhythm" but that might have been lost after he chose to rotate his lineups for the final two league games, with the title wrapped up. Before the loss at Brentford, City was possibly fortunate to come away from Brighton with a 1-1 draw.

Erling Haaland has 52 goals in all competitions in a stunning first season at City but it's just one goal in his last six games for the Norway striker.

Meanwhile, United won its final four matches in the league, conceding just two goals in that period. And in the last meeting between the teams, United won at Old Trafford 2-1 in January — albeit after a debatable equalizing goal from Marcus Rashford.

Sabalenka refuses to take questions on Ukraine war

AP ■ PARIS

Aryna Sabalenka, a Belarusian tennis player seeded No. 2 at the French Open, declined to answer questions about Russia's invasion of Ukraine after she won a match on Wednesday.

After her first-round win Sunday, Sabalenka had said no Russian or Belarusian athletes support the war, but she was asked Wednesday to personally condemn Belarus' role in supporting Russia's invasion.

"I've got no comments to you," the Australian Open champion said in a press conference after her 7-5, 6-2 victory over



Iryna Shymanovich in the second round at the Grand Slam tournament.

Sabalenka's first-round opponent, Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine, had urged reporters to ask the 25-year-old Sabalenka if she personally supports or

opposes the war.

Sabalenka was asked — in the context of potentially becoming the world's No. 1 player — about whether she supports Belarus' authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko. "I have no comments to

you, so thank you for your question," she replied.

Next was the question about Belarus' role in the war.

When a third question was posed, the moderator stepped in, and Sabalenka added: "You've got enough answers from me, and I've got no comments to you." On Sunday, Kostyuk had refused to shake hands with Sabalenka after their match on Court Philippe Chatrier.

After that match, Sabalenka said: "Nobody in this world, Russian athletes or Belarusian athletes, support the war. Nobody. How can we support the war? Nobody — normal people — will never support it."

Gael Monfils withdraws with wrist injury

AP ■ PARIS

A thrilling five-set victory took a toll on Gael Monfils, whose withdrawal from the French Open handed No. 6 Holger Rune a walkover to the third round.

The 36-year-old Frenchman said he has a strained left wrist and can't continue.

He battled Sebastian Baez for nearly four hours on Court Philippe Chatrier before beating the Argentine 3-6, 6-3, 7-5, 1-6, 7-5 in a first-round match that ended at 12:18 a.m. local time Wednesday.

The victory was Monfils' first at tour level this year, as the veteran was coming back from heel surgery.

"Actually, physically, I'm quite fine. But I had the problem with my wrist that I cannot solve," he said. "The doctor say was not good to play with that type of injury. Yesterday was actually very risky, and then today definitely say I should stop."

Monfils reached the semifinals at the French Open in 2008 and made it to the quarterfinals on three other occasions.

French Open hopes AI can help players block death threats, hate

AP ■ PARIS

Frances Tiafoe says he receives death threats via social media after he loses professional tennis matches. Jessica Pegula says the same. So does Donna Vekic — directed at just her or her family, too.

"Everybody gets them after a loss," said Tiafoe, a 25-year-old from Maryland who was scheduled to play in the French Open's second round on Thursday and was a semifinalist at last year's US Open.

"It's just how society is today. I know how that affects people's mental health. That's very real."

Sloane Stephens, the 2017 champion at Flushing Meadows and 2018 runner-up at Roland Garros, says she often deals with racist messages directed at her online, and said some prompted the FBI to investigate.

"It's obviously been a problem my entire career. It has never stopped," said Stephens, who is Black. "If anything, it's only gotten worse."

In a bid to try to protect athletes from that sort of abuse at Roland Garros during the 15-day Grand Slam tournament that ends June 11, the French Tennis Federation (FFT) is paying a company to provide play-



ers with software that uses artificial intelligence to block these sorts of negative comments.

Every contestant in every category — singles, doubles, juniors, wheelchair competitors and so on, for a total of around 700 to 800 — is allowed free access to Bodyguard.ai for use on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. A few dozen players had signed up for the service as of the start of this week, according to Bodyguard.

"This is really important for us: for the players to be very comfortable and be able to focus on the competition. Tennis is mental. It's really what you have in your mind that counts; you're making 1,000 decisions during a match," said FFT CEO

Caroline Flaissier, who put the cost to the federation at somewhere between \$30,000 and \$50,000.

"We know that there is a lot of cyberbullying," she said. "We have to address that major issue, so we thought let's do a test."

That includes monitoring social media used by the FFT and the French Open itself. An FFT spokeswoman said Wednesday that 4,500 messages had been deleted out of the 79,000 received on those accounts since May 21.

Yann Guerin, head of sports for Nice-based Bodyguard, said the company's software — which is constantly updated by employees who might notice new words or emojis that should be part of

the screening — needs less than 100 milliseconds to analyze a comment and delete it if it's "hateful or undesirable." He cited the example of one player who participated in qualifying rounds last week, before the start of the tournament proper.

"He lost ... so he was disappointed. Then he checked his phone and was like, 'Whoa,'" Guerin said, estimating that more than 70% of the comments that athlete received would fall under the heading of "toxicity." "Very bad," Guerin said. "Not bad. VERY bad."

That's nothing out of the ordinary, according to players.

"It's a big issue in tennis. We get these stupid and abusive comments all the time. And to be honest, we are tired of it," said Daria Kasatkina, a 26-year-old from Russia who was a 2022 semifinalist in Paris. "People just do that and they don't get punished. Nothing. Only we suffer from reading all of this (expletive)."

Several players, from various countries, described distasteful messages arriving via apps.

Usually accounts are flooded after a defeat — often, they say, from gamblers disappointed to lose money wagering on a match.



Novak Djokovic moves on from Kosovo comments

AP ■ PARIS

Novak Djokovic sure seemed like someone ready to move on from the latest non-tennis issue he's been involved in during a Grand Slam tournament. Criticised after his previous match for comments about clashes in northern Kosovo between ethnic Serbs and NATO-led peacekeepers, the 22-time major champion stayed away from political matters on Wednesday night.

When his 7-6 (2), 6-0, 6-3 victory over Marton Fucsovics in the second round of the French Open ended, Djokovic, a 36-year-old from Serbia, wrote on the lens of a TV camera — a custom at more and more tennis tournaments — and kept it simple, with an autograph and a smiley face.

It was quite different from what happened after his win Monday, when Djokovic drew attention for writing in Serbian, "Kosovo is the heart of Serbia. Stop the violence," and then speaking out about the matter at a news conference with reporters from his home country.

That drew rebukes from a member of France's government, French Open tournament director Amelie Mauresmo and the Kosovo tennis federation.

Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera warned Djokovic over Wednesday morning not to wade into such international issues again at Roland Garros, saying his comments were "not appropriate." Speaking on TV station France 2, Oudea-Castera said Mauresmo encouraged Djokovic and his entourage to maintain "neutrality" on the field of play.

Asked about Oudea-Castera and Mauresmo, Djokovic responded: "I have no more comment on that. I said what I needed to say."

Russian Olympic cycling medalists barred from races

AP ■ AIGLE (SWITZERLAND)

Two Russian track cyclists who won medals at the Tokyo Olympics were ruled ineligible to race Wednesday for breaching rules monitoring their neutrality during the war on Ukraine.

Anastasiya Voinova and Mariya Novolodskaya cannot race in International Cycling Union (UCI) events from Thursday, the governing body said in a document posted on its website. The world championships are held in August in Glasgow, Scotland.

"This ineligibility will apply for as long as the ad hoc rules regarding Russia and Belarus remain in force," the UCI said in the document without detailing the breaches.

A rules update published May 3 takes effect Thursday and specifies "the strictest neutrali-



ty towards the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus at any time since the beginning of the war in Ukraine is required" to race in UCI events.

The UCI can deny neutral status to riders or officials "who are or have been contracted to the Russian or Belarusian military" or who have shown support for the war in interviews or social media posts. Taking part

in pro-war demonstrations or displaying the "Z" symbol that is associated with the invasion of Ukraine also should be disqualifying.

At the Olympics held in 2021, Voinova took bronze in women's team sprint on the track after getting silver in the event at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. The 30-year-old racer is also a multiple world champion.

Harjai Milkha leads, Nihal second

PTI ■ EDINBURGH

Harjai Milkha Singh proved he is a chip of the old block as he finished strongly with three birdies in the last five holes to card 2-under 70 and take sole lead in Boys 13 category of the US Kids Golf European Championship here.

Playing in extremely cold and freezing conditions, Harjai, son of Indian golf legend Jeev Milkha Singh, and grandson of the Olympic icon the late Milkha Singh, leads at 2-under 142.

With rounds of 72-70, he is two ahead of three others at tied second.

The Indians, who gained an entry into the event after solid showings on local Tours, had another fine day at the highly competitive European Championship.

While Harjai is in sole lead in Boy's 13, Nihal Cheema, the youngest member of the 16-strong Indian squad, is tied-second in Boys under-7.

Bengaluru's Adit

Veeramachaneni is sole third in Boy's 9 section, and Vihaan Jain is tied-fifth in the Boy's 13 competition.

All three Indian girls figured in top-seven. First day co-leader Mahreen Bhatia slipped to tied third with a 75 in Girl's 13-14 category at the Royal Musselburgh Golf Club.

Naina Kapoor (81-85) rose to tied-fifth in the Girl's 11 section but Ananyaa Sood (77-75) slipped from tied-sixth to seventh in Girl's 12.

In Boy's 13, one of the most competitive sections, Harjai was 2-over after seven holes with one birdie and three bogeys, but a birdie on eighth saw him turn in one-over.

On the back nine, Harjai was in full flow as he birdied three times in last five holes. The birdies came on 14th, 15th and 17th holes. With one more round to go Chandigarh golfer is two ahead of American Colin McAskin (73-71), South Africa's Jordan Botha (75-69) and England's Kodi Dean of (77-67).

Thailand Open: Kiran moves to QFs, Ashmita bows out

PTI ■ BANGKOK

India's Kiran George continued his good run as he cruised into the quarterfinals of the Thailand Open Super 500 tournament, beating world number 26 China's Weng Hong Yang in straight games here on Thursday.

Kiran, the world number 59, took 39 minutes to beat his higher-ranked Chinese opponent 21-11, 21-19 in the men's singles round of 16 clash.

It is the first time that Kiran has reached the quarterfinal at a BWF World Tour Super 500 event.

The 2022 Odisha Open winner will face the winner of the match between Ng Ka Long Angus of Hong Kong and Toma Junior Popov of France in last eight clash on Friday.

However, it was the end of the road for 23-year-old Ashmita Chaliha, who went down 18-21



13-21 to former Olympic and three-time World Champion Carolina Marin of Spain.

Later in the day, Saina Nehwal, Lakshya Sen and the men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will play their respective pre-quarterfinals.

The BWF World Tour is divided into six levels, namely World Tour Finals, four Super 1000, six Super 750, seven Super 500, and 11 Super 300 in order. One other category of tournament, the BWF Tour Super 100 level, also offers ranking points.

WE ARE USED TO DUKES BALL: AXAR



PTI ■ PORTSMOUTH

Switching from playing T20s to the longest format of the game is difficult but practising with the red ball through the IPL will help in the tough transition at the World Test Championship final against Australia, feels India all-rounder Axar Patel.

Most members of the Indian team head to the marquee event after playing T20 cricket in the IPL for over two months.

Additionally, while the SG balls are used to play the red-ball format in India, the Dukes ball will be used for the WTC final.

However, India are well prepared for the twin challenges. To familiarise themselves with the Dukes ball, which is used in English conditions, the ‘Men in Blue’ have been working with it.

“We knew about this before the start of the IPL. So even dur-

ing the IPL, it was discussed that we will bowl with the red ball,” Axar told ICC.

“We had red balls, so we were using them. You know when and how to play, how much time you have. This mental switch from white ball to red ball is obviously tough, but we have enough time,” Axar added.

The left-arm spinner, however, said that the focus is on hitting the right spot irrespective of the ball used.

“We switch from white ball to red ball. It is a similar switch to go from SG to Dukes, you have to use your talent and skill. You have to execute your plan, your bowling rhythm. Irrespective of the ball, if you bowl a good ball at a good spot, it works.

“So, that’s what we’re doing. Since the match is in England, which is different from India, we are planning what lines and

lengths will work here. The same thing in practice, we are good to go.”

The first batch of Indian players, including the likes of Virat Kohli and Axar, landed in London early last week and have been preparing for the final, scheduled to be held at The Oval from June 7 to 11.

“Those who did not qualify (for IPL Playoffs) got more time. So I don’t think there will be many problems because we have had a good time to prepare.” “The difference is the Dukes ball remains shinier for longer. But during the IPL, we had ordered the ball, so were practising with it and have gotten used to it,” Axar said.

The Indian team will also have to quickly adapt to the relatively cooler conditions in England, having played the IPL in sweltering heat.

“We came after playing IPL,

where it was 40-45 degrees in India. After that it feels great here. We have taken out our winter clothes and are roaming around wearing jumpers. It’s also a bit windy. Whenever we come to the UK, we enjoy the weather. It remains a little cool, there is no heat.”

In stark contrast to India’s spin-friendly pitches, the conditions in England are more suited to swing bowling.

“Obviously, the conditions in India and England are different. The fast bowlers have more of a role here. In India, spinners play a more important role,” Axar said. “The conditions are the same for both teams. In England, the wind assists swing bowling and offers good bounce if you bowl at the right spots.

“The team is getting together slowly, so the planning will go on. We’ll leave the planning to our bowling coach.”

Oz need to be wary of Pujara, Kohli: Ponting

PTI ■ LONDON

Australia will have to guard against the “thorn in their side” Cheteshwar Pujara and a “back at his best” Virat Kohli if they are to counter India in the World Test Championship final at The Oval next week, feels legendary cricketer Ricky Ponting.

India’s Test batting mainstay Pujara could provide valuable insights to his teammates, having played extensively at Sussex in the English County Championship, while Kohli is at his absolute best having cracked two centuries and six half-tens for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the recently-concluded Indian Premier League.

“The Australian team will be talking about Virat, no doubt about it, and they’ll be talking about Pujara. They’re the two,” Ponting said on ‘The ICC Review.’

Pujara is known to relish the challenges thrown at him by Australian bowlers, having scored more Test runs and centuries against them than any other side, and his contribution would be crucial to India’s chances of lifting the WTC trophy in their second attempt.

“Pujara has been a thorn in their side a lot in the past, and in Australia, and this wicket will potentially be a lot more like an Australian pitch. They know that they’ll have to get him early,” opined the former Australian captain.

Pujara, who bats at No. 3, has 2,033 runs and five centuries in 24 Tests against Australia, and skipper Rohit Sharma will hope he makes a couple of more vital contributions for the side in the



WTC final.

Kohli, apart from his sparkling form in the IPL, had smashed 186 in the fourth Test against Australia in March during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and would be itching to have a go at the Pat Cummins-led side.

“They also know that Virat over the last few weeks is probably just about back to his absolute best, albeit in T20 cricket. He told me that the feeling he’s getting right now is that he’s almost back to his best, and that’s an ominous warning for the Australians going into a one-off game,” said Ponting.

Ponting is also mightily impressed with young Shubman Gill’s performance in the IPL and the 23-year-old’s exploits in the last two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar series.

Gill hit three centuries for Gujarat Titans in IPL. “He looks like a terrific young guy. He’s got that bit of attitude about him as

well. He’s got a bit of swagger. He has some serious class. That sort of front-foot pull shot that he plays against the fast bowlers will be a shot that he’ll probably need against this Australian attack,” said Ponting.

With the pace bowlers likely to do a lot of heavy lifting during the one-off Test, Ponting believes veteran Mohammed Shami will have to be at his absolute best against the strong Australian batting lineup, given that Jasprit Bumrah is not in the frame owing to injury.

“I think he has to step up or try and take his game to another level if India are going to win this game. When you talk to the Australian batters as well, they understand how good Shami is whether it’s new ball or old ball, whether it’s in Australia or India.

“They know the skillset he’s got and how dangerous he can be. It’s going to have to be him,” added Ponting.



Australia head into the WTC final against India wary of their dismal Oval record

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

As Australia begin preparations for the World Test Championship final against India, the men from Down Under would be eager to put their past struggles at The Oval behind them.

In over 140 years of Test cricket in England, Australia have had one of the worst records at The Oval, which will host the final from June 7 to 11 between the top two Test sides.

Australia, who played at The Oval in 1880 in what was the first-ever Test in England, have managed a mere seven wins from 38 Tests at the famous South London venue, putting their success rate at the venue at 18.42 per cent, their poorest across England.

Australia have won just twice in the past 50 years at The Oval. On the other hand, they have 17 wins from 29 matches at The Lord’s at a success rate of 43.59 per cent, which is better than hosts England’s 39.72 per cent from 141 games and South Africa’s 33.33 per cent at the same venue.

Australia have a success rate of 34.62 per cent at Headingley, 30.43 per cent at Trent Bridge, and 29.03 per cent and 26.67 per cent at Old Trafford and Edgbaston respectively.

India, on the other hand, haven’t fared too well at the venue either having won two, drawn seven and lost five games. But the Rohit Sharma-led side will be boosted by the 157-run win over England here in 2021, which was its first victory at the venue in a Test match in 40 years.

According to cricket.com.au, Australia will have their first full training session in the UK on Thursday in Beckenham, which is 20km from central London.

Pat Cummins and his men will train at Kent’s out-ground across the weekend as both sides will be granted access to facilities at The Oval only two days prior to the fixture.

And while The Oval is likely to favour the pacers, Beckenham is known to have a batter-friendly track.

Australia finished the 2021-23 WTC cycle on top of the table, their only loss being the 2-1 away defeat to India earlier this year.

They haven’t beaten the Men in Blue, both home and away, in eight years — four successive series defeats.



Key for both teams will be to dismiss Smith and Kohli early: Finch

PTI ■ LONDON

Former captain Aaron Finch believes that he will put his money on Steve Smith even though Australia will also need to get rid of star India batter Virat Kohli as early as possible in what promises to be an enticing World Test Championship final, starting June 7 at the Oval here.

“Both (Kohli and Smith) will be batting at number four, so the key is to try and get them as early as possible. Early wickets to expose them to the brand new ball will be absolutely key. I will always side with Steve Smith, I think his record is outstanding, but it will be a very good contest,” Finch told Star Sports.

India vs Australia rivalry brings out the best in both teams, he said.

“I think the rivalry is held in such high regard in both countries, that I think it brings out the best in both teams,” he added.

“Obviously, India has had the better of Australia in the last three series I think, so both teams will rise to the occasion no matter where it’s played, at home or away or this time at neutral territory. It’s just a must watch thing.”



‘Conway has caught Williamson bug to keep learning’

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

Former New Zealand spinner John Bracewell believes charismatic batter Devon Conway has caught the “Kane Williamson bug” to “keep learning from past mistakes and making rapid improvements in his batting technique.

Conway, a late entrant into the New Zealand setup at 29, took the cricketing world by storm by smashing a double hundred on Test debut against England in 2021 to become only the seventh batter to do so in the longest format.

Conway, now 31, also played a vital role for Chennai Super Kings in only his second IPL season, scoring six half-centuries and aggregating 672 runs with a highest of an unbeaten 92 and an average touching 52.

His opening partnerships with Ruturaj Gaikwad formed the cornerstone of CSK’s record-equalling fifth title. The all-format New Zealand cricketer was third on the IPL’s Orange Cap list behind Shubman Gill and RCB’s South African skipper Faf du Plessis.

“I think he’s been an absolute magician in terms of his adaptability to all three formats, his skillset and his (growth),” Bracewell, who played 41 Tests garnering 102 wickets and 1000-plus runs, told Sen Radio.

“I like the way he’s become

ing a better cricketer all the time, so he’s obviously caught the Kane Williamson bug of being a learner, not a guy that actually just sits there and relies on being talented,” said the 65-year-old. Conway has so far amassed 1212 Test, 508 ODI and 632 T20I runs, and Bracewell believes the cricketer can rival the best in the business.

“His game is just continuing to progress and that’s something that Kane Williamson had introduced into the New Zealand side along with (former wicketkeeper) BJ Watling.

“That’s something that Devon Conway’s picked up and moved forward with him taking it to another dimension.”

Bracewell believes Conway will play a huge role during the ODI World Cup, scheduled to be held in India in October-November this year, given that Williamson would unlikely have recovered completely from an ACL injury he suffered in the IPL.

“He’s one of a series of components, but he’s certainly an important one,” said Bracewell.

“One, that he knows those (Indian) conditions (and) two, that he’s extremely adaptable in terms of now he’s opening the batting in T20. So he has that adaptability to be able to move up and down the order and fit in, so that makes him a good replacement for somebody like Kane.”

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni successfully underwent a left knee surgery in a Mumbai hospital on Thursday, raising hopes of playing in the 17th edition of Indian Premier League next year.

Dhoni, who led Chennai Super Kings to their fifth IPL title, had flown to Mumbai from Ahmedabad after the final on Monday and consulted renowned sports orthopaedic surgeon Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala, who is also on the BCCI medical panel and had performed surgeries on a number of top Indian cricketers, including Rishabh Pant.

“Yes, Dhoni has had a successful knee surgery at the Kokilaben Hospital in Mumbai on Thursday. He is doing fine and the surgery happened in the morning. I don’t have details. I am yet to get all the details about



the nature of surgery and other things,” CSK CEO Kasi Viswanathan confirmed to PTI.

“He will be discharged in a day or two. He would be resting for a few days before his extensive rehabilitation starts. It is now expected that he would have enough time to get fit to play in the next IPL,” another source close to CSK management told PTI on conditions of anonymity.



will be completely the iconic captain’s call.

After the IPL final, Dhoni had said: “If you circumstantially see, it’s the best time to announce retirement. The easy thing for me to say is thank you and retire. But the hard thing to do is to work hard for nine months and try to play one more IPL season. The body has to hold up. But the amount of love I have received from CSK fans, it would be a gift for them to play one more season.

“The way they’ve shown their love and emotion, it’s something I need to do for them. It’s the last part of my career. It started over here and full house was chanting my name. It was same thing in Chennai, but it will be good to come back and play whatever I can. The kind of cricket I play, they feel they can play that cricket. There’s nothing orthodox about it and I like to keep it simple.”

Ronaldo absent with injury as Saudi soccer season ends

AP ■ RIYADH

Cristiano Ronaldo’s first season in Saudi Arabia came to an end, although the star forward was absent as Al-Nassr beat Al-Fateh 3-0 to finish in second place in the league.

Ronaldo, who signed for the Riyadh club in December before scoring 14 goals in 16 league games, picked up a muscle injury four days previously and was rested ahead of Portugal’s European Championship qualifiers against Bosnia-Herzegovina and Iceland in June.

In the 38-year-old Ronaldo’s absence on Wednesday, Anderson Talisca took center stage to score twice. He also assisted Mohammed Marwan for a third. Al-Ittihad, which had already secured the league championship in the penultimate round, celebrated a first title since 2009 with a 2-0 win against Al-Tai.



Abderazzak Hamdallah of Morocco opened the scoring with a second-half penalty that also secured the golden boot with his 21st goal of the season. Former Leeds United and Wolverhampton winger Helder Costa added the second in injury time. It’s the first league title won by coach Nuno Santo, just 18 months after the Portuguese tactician was dismissed by Tottenham Hotspur in the English Premier League.

Al-Hilal, champions last season, finished in third spot with a 3-2 win over Al-Raed.

The league will expand from 16 to 18 teams next season.

Pathirana set to make ODI debut ahead of WC qualifiers



AP ■ HAMBANTOTA

Sri Lanka has unleashed some special bowling talents ahead of big events over the years.

In the case of Lasith Malinga, he was thrown into the deep end during a so-called Top End tour of Australia in 2004. In the case of Ajantha Mendis, he was introduced just before the Asia Cup and he starred with six wickets against India in the final as Sri Lanka clinched the trophy in 2008.

The same blueprint is to be followed with 20-year-old Matheesha Pathirana, who will make his ODI debut in the three-match series against Afghanistan that gets underway on Friday.

Although Pathirana has played just one Twenty20 International, he is already a star after performing a key role for Chennai in the Super Kings’ run to a record fifth Indian Premier League title.

Pathirana bowls with a unique round-arm action and Sri Lankans hope that he’ll be quite a handful for batters during the World Cup qualifiers later this month in Zimbabwe. Sri Lanka, which won the 1996 World Cup title and has twice been runner-up, needs to go through qualifying because of its slide down the International Cricket Council rankings in the one-day format.

Afghanistan has no such issues after qualifying automatically for the showpiece event later this year in India.

Bowling is Afghanistan’s strength, with three Afghan players featuring in the list of top 10 bowlers in official ICC rankings. Leg-spinner Rashid Khan will miss the first two games because

of a lower-back injury, but off-spinners Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi will find the conditions in Hambantota to their liking.

Afghanistan also has left-arm wrist spinner Noor Ahmed, who was quite a handful for Gujarat Titans during the IPL.

Although bowling is the team’s strong point, Afghanistan also some solid batting.

Ibrahim Zadran showcased that he is a star in the making during the ICC Under-19 World Cup and since graduating to the senior side, he has smashed three centuries in just eight one-dayers. That includes a career-best 162, the highest score by an Afghan in ODIs.

Friday’s series-opener will be the first international to be staged at Hambantota in more than three years.

The series was hastily arranged after Sri Lanka failed to automatically qualify for the World Cup, and will provide an opportunity for the selectors to take a final look at some of the players before they submit the squad to the ICC before the June 10 deadline.

Sri Lanka has recalled test captain Dimuth Karunaratne to the squad. Karunaratne was fired as ODI captain and dropped from the squad in 2021. However, with the batting unit not able to utilize the full quota of 50 overs often enough, the need for Karunaratne’s stable presence has been felt.

The hosts also have recalled fast bowler Dushmantha Chameera, who is returning after seven months following ankle surgery.

SQUADS:

SRI LANKA: Dasun Shanaka (captain), Kusal Mendis (vice-captain) Pathum Nissanka, Dimuth Karunaratne, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Angelo Mathews, Dhananjaya de Silva, Charith Asalanka, Wanindu Hasaranga, Maheesh Theekshana, Dushan Hemantha, Chamika Karunaratne, Dushmantha Chameera, Matheesha Pathirana, Lahiru Kumara, Kasun Rajitha.

AFGHANISTAN: Hashmatullah Shahidi (captain), Rahmat Shah (vice-captain), Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Ibrahim Zadran, Riaz Hassan, Najibullah Zadran, Mohammad Nabi, Ikram Alikhail, Azmatullah Omarzai, Rashid Khan, Mujib ur Rahman, Noor Ahmad, Abdul Rahman, Fazal Haq Farooqi, Farid Ahmad Malik.

You had a lot of selfish characters playing for England: Harmison

PTI ■ LONDON

Former England pacer Steve Harmison has hinted that quite a few senior players in the side did not contribute to the team spirit in the late 90s and early 2000s, but all that changed during the 2005 Ashes series, which the hosts won 2-1.

Responding to former Australian quick Jason Gillespie’s assessment that he had noticed a big change in the England side during the 2005 Ashes, Harmison, who was part of the 2005 side, said that, “The difference between that and 2003,

2001 and 1999, 1997, was in 2005 we were a team.”

Gillespie had suggested that he had never seen such camaraderie in the England team during previous series between the two sides.

“I noticed a big difference in the England side in the ‘05 Ashes... we’d never felt that as an Australian side before,” Gillespie told ‘Sen Radio’ on Thursday.

“England would normally go out in dribs or drabs going onto the field... (but this time) it was really noticeable that as soon as the umpires walked out there,



(England skipper) Michael Vaughan was straight out there, everyone was straight out there, quick chat and then they would literally run to their fielding positions, the bowler would run

and hand his cap to the umpire and before our batters were halfway onto the ground, the whole England team was set up ready to play, ready to rock,” added Gillespie.

Harmison, 44, who played 63 Tests taking 226 wickets, said quite a few “selfish” players contributed to the poor culture in the England side.

“We’d grown up as a team, we played as a team and we behaved off the field like a team (in 2005). In 1997, 2001, 2003/04, you had a lot of selfish characters playing for England,” said Harmison.