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NEW DELHI, MONDAY JUNE 5, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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Rly Board seeks CBI probe into accident

Min identifies cause of Balasore tragedy; train service resumes

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Railway Board has called for a CBI probe into the tragic train accident in Balasore, even as Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav has said the "root cause" of the accident has been identified as issues with the point machine and the electronic interlocking system. Later on Sunday night, the first train on the section where the accident happened in Balasore started its journey, 51 hours after the horrific crash which killed 275 people, officials said.

Earlier in the day Vaishnav said, "We have recommended a CBI probe into the triple train accident that claimed 275 lives and left over 1,000 injured," stated the Railway Minister, emphasising the severity of the incident. Both the Central and State Governments are extending their full support to the injured patients, who are currently receiving treatment in hospitals located in Balasore, Cuttack, and Bhubaneswar. Vaishnav assured reporters that the patients are being provided



Restoration work underway at the site of Friday's triple train accident near Bahanaga Bazar railway station, in Balasore district, Sunday

PTI

with all necessary facilities and round-the-clock medical attention on dedicated teams of doctors. On Sunday, the Odisha Government revised the death toll from the triple train accident to 275 from the previously reported 288, with the number

of injuries now standing at 1,175. Later on Sunday, Minister Vaishnav shared further details regarding the identified root cause of the accident. He mentioned that a change made to the electronic interlocking system was responsible for the incident.

However, he denied any connection between the accident and the anti-collision system known as "Kavach." "The inquiry into the accident has been completed, and once the commissioner of railway safety (CRS) provides his report, all the

details will be known.

The root cause of the horrifying incident has been identified... I do not want to go into details. Let the report come out," explained the Railway Minister.

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Police warn against bid to create communal strife



Union Ministers Ashwini Vaishnav and Dharmendra Pradhan take stock of the ongoing restoration work, at the triple train accident site, Bahanaga Bazar, in Balasore, Sunday.

PTI

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Police on Sunday appealed to all sections to desist from circulating rumours giving a communal colour to Balasore's triple train accident where at least 275 people have died and over 1,100 injured.

The Odisha police also warned that severe legal action would be initiated against those people who were found trying to create communal disharmony by spreading any rumour regarding the train tragedy which is said to be the worst train disaster in India's history. Taking to the micro-blogging site Twitter, the Odisha

Police said: "It has come to our notice that some social media handles are mischievously giving a communal colour to the tragic train accident at Balasore. This is highly unfortunate."

It added, "We appeal to all concerned to desist from circulating such false and ill-motivated posts. Severe legal action will be initiated against those who are trying to create communal disharmony by spreading rumours."

Among other social media messages were some which linked a structure near the rail accident site with a particular community, which many others have condemned.

Unclaimed bodies create space crunch in morgues

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha is facing a space crunch in morgues as a large number of unclaimed dead bodies from Balasore's triple train accident have piled up at its mortuaries. Unable to cope with the large numbers, the Odisha Government has shifted 187 of them to Bhubaneswar from Balasore, a district headquarters town.

However, here too a space crunch is making the situation a tough one for morgue administrators. While 110 bodies were kept at the AIIMS Bhubaneswar, the remaining have been sent to Capital Hospital, Amri Hospital, Sum Hospital and some other private facilities.

"It is a real challenge for us too, to preserve the bodies here as we have a facility to keep a maximum of 40 bodies," an official of AIIMS Bhubaneswar told PTI, adding that additional arrangements were made at the Anatomy department.

The authorities at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar have procured coffins, ice and formalin chemicals to preserve the bodies till they are identified. Sources said State Government officials on Saturday drew the attention of Prime Minister Narendra



Relatives identify photos of passengers displayed by the authorities following Friday's accident involving three trains, at NOCCI Business Park in Balasore district on Sunday

PTI

Modi towards the situation created to preserve the bodies in the State during his visit to train accident site on Saturday.

"It is really difficult to keep bodies in this hot summer weather condition," the official said. The Prime Minister, sources said, called up Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya from the accident site itself and asked him to make arrangements at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar for the preservation of these bodies. Mandaviya immediately

rushed to Bhubaneswar overnight and held several meetings here in the State capital. Odisha Chief Secretary P K Jena said the bodies were brought to Bhubaneswar in 85 ambulances on Saturday and another 17 bodies reached here on Sunday.

"All bodies have been accommodated in cold storage arrangements (due to shortage of morgues)," Odisha's Health and Family Welfare secretary Shalini Pandit told PTI.

Continued on Page 2

Judicial panel to probe violence in Manipur

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Sunday set up a Commission of Inquiry, headed by former Chief Justice of the Gauhati High Court Ajai Lamba, to probe the recent series of violence in Manipur that claimed 98 lives.

Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday appealed to the people of Manipur to lift the blockades from National Highway-2 so that basic and essential goods such as food, medicines and fuel can reach the state. "My sincerest appeal to the people of Manipur is to lift the blockades at the Imphal-Dimapur, NH-2 Highway, so that food, medicines, petrol/diesel, and other necessary items can reach the people," he said. "I also request that civil society organisations do the needful in bringing consensus," he added.

Shah further said in his tweet, "Together only we can restore normalcy in this beautiful state." According to a Gazette notification issued by the Union Home Ministry, the commission will make inquiry with respect of the causes and spread of the violence and riots targeting members of different communities, which took place in Manipur on May 3 and thereafter.

Ethnic violence broke out in Manipur after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts on May 3 to



People from Manipur stage a protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Sunday.

Ranjana Dimri/Pioneer

protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status.

The commission will probe the sequence of events leading to, and all the facts relating to such violence; whether there were any lapses or dereliction of duty in this regard on the part of any of the responsible authorities/individuals and adequacy of the administrative measures taken to prevent, and to deal with the violence and riots.

The commission will also look into the complaints or allegations that may be made before it by any individual or association.

The panel will submit its report to the Central Government as soon as possible but not later than six months from the date of its first

sitting. The commission, however, if it deems fit, can make interim reports to the Central Government before the said date. The other members of the commission are retired IAS officer Himanshu Shekhar Das and retired IPS officer Aloka Prabhakar.

The death toll from clashes has gone up to over 98, officials said. The violence was preceded by tension over the eviction of Kuki villagers from reserve forest land, which had led to a series of smaller agitations.

Shah had visited Manipur for four days between May 29 and June 1 and after taking stock of the situation had announced that the Centre would soon constitute a Commission of Inquiry to probe the violence in the State.

Naidu meets Shah in Delhi to discuss ties as polls near

This was TDP chief, Shah's first meeting since 2018 alliance break

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief Chandrababu Naidu has met BJP president JP Nadda and Home Minister Amit Shah here to discuss an alliance ahead of the Telangana Assembly election later this year and General Elections next year. According to sources, the BJP and the TDP may have an alliance for the Telangana Assembly elections to be held this year. This was Naidu's first meeting with Shah since 2018 when the TDP pulled out of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The meeting lasted for over half an hour late on Saturday night, sources said. Naidu, who is here to attend the consultative meeting of the leaders on G20, is also slated to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The TDP won two seats in

Telangana Assembly in 2018 with the BJP opening its account with a single MLA. The ruling Bharatiya Rashtriya Samithi (BRS) came to power with 88 seats as the Congress won 19 seats. In Andhra Pradesh the TDP badly lost the 2019 Assembly elections to the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) which won the elections in a landslide, winning 151 of the 175 seats.

The incumbent TDP won only 23 seats and the BJP was unable to win a single seat in Andhra Pradesh.

The TDP was a part of the NDA in 2014 but quit the ruling alliance in March 2018 before the 2019 elections on the issue of special status to Andhra Pradesh.

However, both the parties came together after the recent municipal elections in Port Blair. Interestingly, in the last episode of his radio programme 'Mann ki baat', the Prime Minister had recalled NT Rama Rao (NTR), the TDP founder and late Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh for seven years over three terms, on his birth anniversary.

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CAPSULE

VETERAN ACTRESS SULOCHANA DIES AT 94

Mumbai: Noted actress Sulochana Latkar died on Sunday due to prolonged illness at a hospital here at the age of 94. Latkar, a well-known actor of Marathi and Hindi cinema featured in over 250 films. In Bollywood, she largely played on-screen mother to lead stars of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s including Sunil Dutt, Dev Anand, Rajesh Khanna, Dilip Kumar, and Amitabh Bachchan. She featured in Hindi blockbuster hits such as 'Heera', 'Reshma Aur Shera', 'Jaani Dushman', 'Kati Patang', 'Mere Jeevan Saathi' to name a few. Latkar was honoured with Padma Shri in 1999.

UNDER-CONSTRUCTION BRIDGE FALLS IN BIHAR

Patna: An under-construction four-lane bridge over the Ganga in Bihar's Bhagalpur came crashing down, but the Government said it was brought down on the advice of experts as it had design flaws and a portion of it had fallen earlier. The bridge was supposed to connect Khagaria district with Bhagalpur and it was inaugurated in 2014 by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. The superstructure of the bridge fell into the river and it was caught on video by locals. "The incident of under-construction bridge collapse happened at around 6 PM.

ARUNACHAL MIXES 44 PVN POWER MOAS

Namsai (Arunachal): The Arunachal Pradesh Government has terminated 44 memorandum of agreements (MoAs) with various private power developers as they "showed less interest" in executing projects allotted to them, Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein said here on Sunday.

MEHBOOBA GETS PP AFTER THREE YEARS

Srinagar: PDP president and former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti has been issued a passport with 10-year validity, sources said here on Sunday after more than three years of legal battle. Authorities had declined to renew Mehbooba's passport since 2019 citing "adverse" police report, after which she moved the Delhi High Court.

People of India will defeat BJP: Rahul

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has said after the Karnataka election victory his party will "decimate" the BJP in Telangana and other State polls, emphasising that it is not just the Congress party but the people of India who are going to defeat its hate-filled ideology. "We have shown in Karnataka that we can decimate the BJP... We did not defeat them, we decimated them. We smashed them in Karnataka," Gandhi said at a dinner event organised by the Indian Overseas Congress-USA. Gandhi arrived in New York after visiting Washington and San Francisco and will address a community rally at the Javits Centre in Manhattan late on Sunday. He said in the Karnataka elections, the BJP "tried everything in the book, they had the entire media, they had 10 times the amount of money we had, they had the



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during an event at Roosevelt House, home of late US President Franklin Roosevelt, in New York.

PTI

Government, they had the agency. They had everything and then we decimated them," Gandhi said. "And I want you to know that we are going to decimate them in Telangana

next," he said to loud cheers and applause from the gathering. "It will be hard to find the BJP in Telangana after this election." Election in the southern Indian state is scheduled to be held later this year.

Congress supporters, officials, party members and members of the diaspora gathered in large numbers at the community event that was also attended by New York City Mayor Eric Adams.

Apart from the Telangana election, there are elections scheduled for Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh where we will do the same we did to them in Karnataka," Gandhi said to cheers and applause from the supporters. "It is not just the Congress party that is going to defeat the BJP. It is the people of India, the people of Madhya Pradesh, the people of Telangana, the people of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh who are going to defeat the BJP," Gandhi said. Continued on Page 2

Some things bigger than politics when you go abroad, says EAM

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/CAPE TOWN

As Congress leader Rahul Gandhi repeatedly criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Government during his ongoing visit to the US, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said there are sometimes "things bigger than politics" when you go abroad.

These remarks by the Minister in Capetown came in the backdrop of Rahul in an address to Indian Americans in Santa Clara, US earlier this week described Modi as a "specimen" and attacked his Government's policies on var-



ious fronts.

Countering him, Jaishankar, while speaking at an event in Cape Town late Saturday after attending the meeting of BRICS Foreign Ministers, said he can talk for himself and does not do politics while travelling abroad. He, however, did not name Rahul.

"Look, I said I can only talk for myself I try when I go abroad not to do politics."

"I'm perfectly prepared to argue and argue very vigorously at home. Okay, so you will never find me wanting in that regard," he said in response to a question.

"But I think you know, even a democratic culture has a certain collective responsibility. There is a national interest there is a collective image. There are sometimes things bigger than politics and when you step outside the country, I think that's important to remember.

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Mehbooba issued passport after 3 yrs

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

PDIP president and former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti has been issued a regular passport with a validity of 10 years, after more than three years of legal battle.

Authorities had declined to renew Mehbooba's passport since 2019 citing "adverse" police report, after which she moved the Delhi High Court. The high court, in an order in March this year, stated that the passport authority should decide within three months on issuing a fresh travel document to her.

The former chief minister got her new passport just days ahead of a hearing scheduled in the Jammu and Kashmir High Court this week on her daughter's plea for a regular travel document for herself.

In her plea in the Jammu and Kashmir HC, Mehbooba's daughter Iltija challenged the



decision of the passport office to give her a country-specific passport with a limited validity of two years to facilitate her higher education. Iltija had refused to accept the conditional travel document and approached the high court with a plea for a regular passport for all countries and with a validity of 10 years.

The new passport given to Mehbooba, the last chief minister of the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir state before it was bifurcated in 2019, is valid from June 1, 2023 to May 31, 2033.

After several rounds back-and-forth pleas in the Delhi

High Court, Justice Pratibha M Singh had ordered in March this year that the passport authority should decide within three months on issuing a fresh travel document to Mehbooba. "Considering that the matter is remanded back to the passport officer and the initial rejection was two years ago, let the passport officer concerned take a decision expeditiously and in any case within three months," the judge had noted in the order.

The court's order had come on a petition by Mehbooba seeking a direction to the passport authorities to take an early decision on her appeal regarding the issuance of a new passport.

In her plea to the Delhi High Court, the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister said there was a considerable delay in issuing a new passport to her despite reminders and that no decision was being taken on her appeal.

HC to announce order on Sisodia's bail plea today

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court will on Monday pronounce its order on AAP leader Manish Sisodia's plea seeking interim bail for six weeks in a money laundering case arising from the alleged excise policy scam.

The former Delhi deputy chief minister has sought release on a temporary basis on the ground of being the sole caretaker of his ailing wife. His plea for regular bail in the matter is pending before the high court. Sisodia, who was arrested on March 9, is currently in judicial custody in the case lodged by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The verdict on the interim bail plea will be pronounced by Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma.

It was reserved on Saturday when Sisodia's lawyer had claimed that pursuant to the court's directions passed on Friday, the Aam Aadmi Party

(AAP) leader was taken in custody to meet his wife earlier in the day but the latter's health condition deteriorated and she was taken to be the LNJP Hospital before he could reach home.

The ED has opposed the plea for interim bail on the grounds of possibility of evidence tampering. The ED's lawyer has also claimed that Sisodia's wife has been suffering from a medical condition for the last 20 years and even earlier pleas for interim bail on identical grounds were withdrawn by the former minister. On May 30, the court had dismissed Sisodia's bail plea in the excise policy scam case being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), saying he is an influential person and the allegations against him are very serious in nature. In the CBI case, the high court has kept the interim bail plea pending for July.

AAP misleading parties on Ordinance issue: Bidhuri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a dig at AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal, Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Saturday said AAP convener and his entire team is misleading the political parties on the issue of Ordinance. Bidhuri claimed that Kejriwal's operation Ordinance would fall flat and he would not be succeeded in his mission. Kejriwal has been reaching out to leaders of non-BJP parties to garner support against the ordinance so that the Centre's bid to replace it through a bill is defeated when it is brought in Parliament.

Bidhuri stated that Kejriwal is instilling fear in the minds of chief ministers of other states that the central government can bring the same ordinance against them as it did in Delhi. "But he is not elaborating them about unique status of the national capital which is why the Centre brought the Ordinance. The Constitution clearly defines the situations of



all these states, and the distribution of departments is also clear. There is nothing unconstitutional in it, as alleged by Kejriwal," said Bidhuri adding that all chief ministers and other opposition leaders know that the status of Delhi in the Constitution is not the same as that of Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra, or Jharkhand.

"The Constitution clearly defines the situations of all these states, and the distribution of departments is also clear," he said.

Bidhuri stated that the central government, after the order issued by the Supreme Court on May 11, also followed the suggestion of the Supreme Court when it issued the ordinance on May 19. In the May 11 judgment, the Supreme Court clearly defined the pow-

ers of the central government, stating that the central government can change this order by making laws if it desires. That is why the central government chose the path of making laws based on the suggestion of the Supreme Court.

He mentioned that between May 11 and May 19, the Delhi government what did and how it manipulated all the corruption cases, including tampering with files, transferring all the officers who were investigating corruption allegations. All of this is evident to the public. It is clear that the Delhi government wants to cover up all scams, including the liquor scam.

Bidhuri further stated that all officers investigating these cases are being harassed severely, and an atmosphere of fear and terror has been created in the bureaucracy. Since all the secrets of Kejriwal's corrupt dealings are being revealed, he is so troubled and is attempting to spread confusion across the country, although opposition leaders are also familiar with Kejriwal's cunning tactics.

Naidu meets Shah in...

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Naidu is the son-in-law of the NTR who founded the TDP in 1982. The TDP walked out of Modi's coalition over the "non-delivery of financial support by the Centre".

After quitting the NDA in 2018 it had also sought for a no-confidence motion against the Modi Government.

The BJP does not have grassroots electoral or a cadre base in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and thus wants an alliance with the TDP which too has been marginalised after its sound beating in the last Assembly poll in Andhra Pradesh.

The Assembly polls in Andhra are due in 2024.

The TDP's possible return to the NDA would be a "positive development" for the Modi Government with the Lok Sabha polls being only 10-11 months away, sources said.

Some things bigger than politics when you go abroad, says...

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"So I might differ strongly with someone. I could say to you, I differ with them. But how I counter it, I would like to go back home and do it. And watch me when I get back," Jaishankar said.

Elaborating on the Indian foreign policy, he said one part of the policy today is extremely focused on securing the welfare of Indian citizens abroad.

He said given the globalisation of Indians today, it is important that systems are put in place which will respond to difficult situations.

"Sometimes they can be very country specific. We had a few weeks ago, very nasty situation in Sudan, and we

have 5,000 Indians died last year, when the fighting started in Ukraine. We had more than 20,000 Indians now. In fact, when I look at these last nine years, almost every year, we've had one situation somewhere.

"So, it's something which will keep happening. And we will have that fundamental obligation today to take care of Indian Indians. Working, living, traveling abroad," he said.

"It could be something like providing a flight, it could even be sometimes there are people who are stuck abroad, who have no money who are stuck in cases, they can't afford it. You know, we, unfortunately, have cases sometimes that people will pass away," he added.

Veteran actress Sulochana dies at 94

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Noted actor Sulochana Latkar died on Sunday due to prolonged illness at a hospital here, her grandson-in-law Parag Ajjavkar confirmed. She was 94.

Latkar, a well-known actor of Marathi and Hindi cinema, started her career in 1940s and went on to feature in over 250 films.

The actor was admitted to Shushrushta Hospital in Dadar on May 8.

"She passed away at around 6.30 pm at the hospital due to prolonged illness. She had a respiratory tract infection for which she was admitted on May 8," Parag told PTI.

Some of Latkar's notable films are "Sasurvas", "Vahinichya Bangdya", and "Dhakti Jau" in Marathi and "Aaye Din Bahar Ke", "Gora Aur Kala", "Devar", "Talaash", and "Azaad", in Hindi.



In Bollywood, the actor largely played on-screen mother to lead stars of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s including Sunil Dutt, Dev Anand, Rajesh Khanna, Dilip Kumar, and Amitabh Bachchan.

She featured in Hindi blockbuster hits such as "Heera", "Roshni Aur Shera", "Jaani Dushman", "Jab Pyar Kisise Hota Hai", "Jonny Mera Naam", "Kati Patang", "Mere Jeevan Saathi", "Prem Nagar", and "Bhola Bhala".

Latkar was honoured with Padma Shri in 1999. She is survived by her daughter Kanchan Ghanekar.

Cong pitches Gehlot's welfarism, BJP counters with PM Modi's 'labhartis'

SIANS ■ JAIPUR

Even as Rajasthan is all set to go for assembly polls in December, the factionalism in the Congress and the BJP is out in the open.

While the high command in both the parties is trying to send out the message that all's well in their party, things are not hunky dory. In the Congress, it's Ashok Gehlot versus Sachin Pilot while in the BJP former chief minister Vasundhara Raje has been missing many crucial organisational events. However, despite these differences, the two parties are working hard to emerge victorious and are confident of winning the elections.

If Congress is pitching Gehlot's welfarism, then BJP is countering with Modi's 'labhartis' Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot

is seen touring the state continuously while promoting his government's schemes. For the BJP, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is making frequent rounds of the state.

While the Bharatiya Janata Party is planning to reach voters door to door through the women being benefited by the Central government's schemes, the Congress is also planning to go the same route.

CM Gehlot is meeting the beneficiaries of his much publicised inflation relief camps organised across the state. People in lakhs are attending these camps to express gratitude to the chief minister for getting a gas cylinder for Rs 500 and free electricity up to 100 units. In fact, there are plans to give lakhs of women free mobiles on this Raksha Bandhan.

Crime Branch arrests wanted man

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's Crime Branch arrested a 30-year-old criminal, who was wanted in nine cases registered in Haryana and the national Capital, said an official on Sunday. The accused was identified as Rahul Sethi, a resident of Sagarpur in Delhi. He was also found previously involved in 50 cases of snatching, robbery, auto theft among others.

The Special Commissioner of Police (Crime) Ravindra Singh Yadav said that specific inputs were received that a proclaimed offender Rahul would come on a stolen motorcycle at Vikas Nagar.

"Acting on the inputs a trap was laid and Rahul was apprehended," said Yadav.

On interrogation, Rahul, who was born in Hisar, Haryana, disclosed that he came to Delhi in 2000.

Unclaimed bodies create...

From Page 1

Admitting that identification was a major challenge for the administration as the victims hailed from different States, the Chief Secretary said the State Government has uploaded the details of the passengers on three websites of the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC), Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) and Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA).

Lists and photographs of deceased passengers are also uploaded on the websites to facilitate identification.

Stating that the photographs of the deceased in the Balasore train accident are being posted only to facilitate identification, the chief sec-

retary said keeping in view the nature of the accident, the images posted are too disturbing.

"Nobody can or should reproduce or publish or in any way the images without the prior written approval of the Special Relief Commissioner, Odisha", a senior official said. "The bodies are mutilated... I came across just one head of a human being and no other body parts to go with it," one of the doctors told PTI.

Meanwhile, a control room has been set up in the office of the Bhubaneswar Municipal Commissioner's office. People can get information about the bodies and help in their identification by contacting this office.

At least 288 people were killed and over 1,100 injured

in the triple train accident in Balasore.

Three trains— Shalimar-Chennai Coromandel Express, Bengaluru-Howrah Super fast and a goods train — were involved in Friday's accident, now being described as one of India's worst train accidents.

The Coromandel Express crashed into a stationary goods train, derailing most of its coaches at around 7 pm on Friday. A few coaches of Coromandel toppled over the last few coaches of the Bengaluru-Howrah Express which was passing by at the same time.

Investigators are looking into possible human error, signal failure and other possible causes behind the three-train crash.

People of India will defeat BJP...

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He added that the reason for this is that "India has understood that it cannot go forward with the type of hatred that the BJP is spreading in society."

"That is what is going to happen in the next few states. And then after that in 2024 we will do the same... The opposition is united, we are all working together. It is an ideological battle.

On one side, there is a divisive ideology of the BJP, the hate-filled ideology of the BJP. On the other side, there is the affectionate, loving ideology of the Congress party," he said.

He said in Karnataka, the BJP tried to polarise the election and create anger and

hatred between communities.

"Prime Minister himself tried it. Did it work," he said as the audience replied no.

Gandhi said the people of Karnataka declared that the election is about prices, unemployment and corruption.

Gandhi referred to his slogan made during the Bharat Jodo Yatra, during which he had said "Nafrat ke bazaar mein mohabbat ki dukan kholenge."

Adams said the "New Delhi of America is right here in New York City."

"This community is one of the most highly-educated, one of the most highly business operated and owned," he said, adding that what is

unique about America is that, "we tell you never give up your homeland as you embrace your adopted land," amid a round of applause and cheers from those gathered.

"You are Indian-(dash)Americans. As you embrace America, do not remove the Indian part," the NYC Mayor said.

He added that India "historically has given so much not only to the geographical boundaries of your country but what the Indian community historically has given to the globe is just remarkable and has yet to truly be reflected in historical proportions.

"All of the great Nobel peace prize winners have basically borrowed from the

rich history of your society," he said, adding that they have drawn inspiration from the ancient Vedas and early writings.

Earlier in the day, Gandhi "had a thought-provoking fireside chat" with leading thinkers of New York at Roosevelt House, home of former US President, Franklin D Roosevelt.

Gandhi said the members of the diaspora in the US are "our ambassadors" and have shown America and the rest of the world "what it means to be Indian."

He said there is a fight going on back home and a similar fight also in America about two different visions for India.

"One vision which is our

vision - accepts everybody, embraces everybody, respects everybody, loves everybody, and wants everybody to be a part of the future of our country regardless of their religion, their community, their caste, their language.

"We are fighting our friends in the BJP...they have a very limited view of our country," he said.

Addressing the audience and the diaspora at the event, Gandhi said: "You respect other religions. You respect other cultures.

You respect other people, you respect women. And that is the best way to fight the BJP, to live according to the ideology that we believe in," he said, adding that the fight is not difficult.

Rly Board seeks CBI probe into...

From Page 1

Meanwhile, officials investigating the case have stated that the Coromandel Express was not exceeding the speed limit and had received a green signal to enter a loop line, where a goods train was stationary. This finding virtually



CHANGE OF NAME

I, Hema Bhargava W/o Shri Vineet Bhargava R/o 5-A, Pocket-3, Mayur Vihar Phase-1, Delhi-110091 have changed my name Hema Salhotra to Hema Bhargava for all future purposes.

PD(053)C

clears the driver of the Coromandel Express of any responsibility for the accident, which claimed the lives of 288 people in Balasore district.

Two key officials from the Railway Board, Sandeep Mathur (Principal Executive Director of Signalling) and Jaya Varma Sinha (Member of Operation and Business Development), shed light on how the accident might have occurred. They explained the functioning of the interlocking system, which appeared to have played a role in the incident that resulted in the tragic loss of at least 288 lives.

Sinha clarified that the direction, route, and signal were all set for the Coromandel Express. "Green signal means that in every way, the driver knows that his path ahead is clear, and he can proceed with his permitted maximum speed.

The permitted speed in this section was 130 kmph, and he was running his train at 128 kmph, which we have confirmed from loco logs," she stated.

As investigations continue, the railway authorities await the report from the commissioner of railway safety to obtain further insights into the accident. The CBI's involvement is expected to ensure a thorough and impartial investigation into the tragic Balasore train accident.

A devastating collision involving the Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express, Shalimar-Chennai Central Coromandel Express, and a goods train occurred on Friday evening near the Bahanaga Bazar station in Balasore, Odisha. The accident site is situated approximately 250 km south of Kolkata and 170 km

north of Bhubaneswar. According to officials, the latest reports indicate that 288 people lost their lives in the tragic incident. Around 1,175 individuals have been admitted to various hospitals, including private medical facilities, for treatment.

Initial findings suggest that the Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express was running at a speed of 126 kmph. Jaya Varma Sinha, Member of Operation and Business Development, clarified that neither train involved in the collision was exceeding the speed limit. Instead, a signaling issue has emerged as a probable cause.

"The only train involved in the accident was the Coromandel Express. It collided with the goods train, resulting in the coaches of the Coromandel Express piling up

on top of the goods train. The goods train was carrying iron ore, making it a heavy train. Consequently, the impact of the collision was primarily absorbed by the train," explained Sinha.

A preliminary report indicates that the Coromandel Express had entered the loop line at the station, where a stationary goods train loaded with iron ore was parked.

Sandeep Mathur, Principal Executive Director of Signalling, provided insight into how the two key components—point machine and interlocking system—could be responsible for the accident. When a train needs to move to a loop line, the point machine must be operated.

"We need to ensure whether the track ahead is occupied or not. The signal is interlocked in such a manner

that it indicates if the line ahead is occupied or not. It also reveals whether the train will move straight or towards the loop line. If the point shows straight and the track ahead is clear, the signal turns green. However, if the point directs the train towards the loop line and the track is clear, the signal turns yellow, indicating a different route," explained Mathur.

The interlocking system is designed to guide trains safely out of a station and can be either electronic or non-electronic. Both officials emphasized that the system is "fail-safe" and "error-proof."

"It is called a fail-safe system, meaning that even if it malfunctions, all signals will turn red, and train operations will cease. As the minister mentioned, there was an issue with the signaling system. It

could be a physical error, such as someone accidentally damaging the cables during excavation," Sinha added.

Sinha also dismissed circulating rumors that the railway authorities prioritize the Vande Bharat trains over safety concerns. She clarified that the railways' top priority is safety and they are capable of simultaneously addressing various aspects such as station development and Vande Bharat train projects.

Restoration work is currently underway, and at least two affected railway lines at the accident site are expected to be operational by 8 pm on Sunday.

Jaya Varma further announced that a helpline number, 139, has been set up for affected individuals. Senior railway officers are manning the helpline and making efforts to connect as many people as

possible.

"Family members of the injured or deceased can call us, and we will ensure that they can meet their loved ones. We will take care of their journey and other related expenses," assured Varma.

The railways also said that the 139 service will continue uninterrupted and will ensure prompt disbursement of ex-gratia announced by the minister -- Rs 10 lakh in case of death, Rs 2 lakh for grievous injuries and Rs 50,000 for minor injuries.

So far, the railways has disbursed Rs 3.22 crore as ex-gratia in 285 cases -- 11 deaths, 50 grievous injuries and 224 minor injuries. The Indian Railways is paying ex-gratia amounts at seven locations -- Soro, Kharagpur, Balasore, Khantapara, Bhadrak, Cuttack and Bhubaneswar.

Human chain formed to save Yamuna

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A large number of people gathered along the Yamuna river banks to form a human chain on early Sunday morning under a citizen-centric initiative to save the river from heavy pollution. Under the "Yamuna Sansad" initiative, people formed the human chain at many places, including ITO, Wazirabad, Kalindikunj, Geeta Colony and Old Usmanpur, raising the demand to revive the river overburdened with sewage and industrial waste discharged in it.

A large number of representatives of social, cultural and religious organisations too participated in the campaign.

Many politicians, including former BJP organisation secretary Govindacharya, Delhi AAP convener and Arvind Kejriwal Government Minister Gopal Rai, Delhi Water Minister Saurabh Bhargava, Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri and Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva, too attended the campaign.

Delhi Water Minister Saurabh Bhargava, who joined humanchain at Chhat Ghat at ITO, said that the Kejriwal government will make the Yamuna pollution-free, reaching the river only after treating the sewage of



Delhi's colonies in Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) by 2025. "In 2014, there were only 220 unauthorised colonies in Delhi with sewer lines. Today, there are 832 colonies with sewer lines. Initially, STPs in Delhi were treating 350 Million Gallons per Day (MGD) of sewage. Now, STP capacity has increased to 550 MGD, and by 2025, it will be 900 MGD," he said.

Bhargava said, "Pollution is a big problem all over the world: be it air pollution or water pollution. With modernisation came some shortcomings in our society, pollution being one of them. However, the positive aspect is that in recent years, there has been an increasing awareness about pollution

among both individuals and governments. Governments allocate separate funds in their budgets to address pollution.

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai participated in the "Yamuna Sansad" program organised at Chhat Ghat, ITO, said, "The Yamuna is not just any river for Delhi, but it sustains a vast ecosystem within the city. The majority of Delhi's water requirements are met by the Yamuna, making it a crucial resource for both economic and ecological purposes. However, the river's ecological balance has been disrupted over time due to the excessive discharge of chemicals, plastics, and other non-biodegradable pollutants. Nevertheless, our government is taking all necessary

steps to preserve the sanctity of this sacred river.

Rai appealed to all the people present, "To enhance the ecological condition of Delhi, it is imperative for all individuals to make a commitment to refrain from contaminating the Yamuna river water. It is only through public participation that the environment can be made better and pollution free. The Delhi government will run this campaign as a public campaign in collaboration with the citizens of Delhi."

"Yamuna Sansad" convener Ravi Shankar Tiwari said the human chain was formed expressing peoples' resolve to contribute to reviving the Yamuna that has been "rendered into a drain despite years of

efforts by governments to clean it".

Criticising the Kejriwal government for failing to clean Yamuna, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said that it has been more than eight years since Arvind Kejriwal came to power and what he used to say about Yamuna cleaning eight years ago, he is repeating the same thing even today but nothing concrete has been done to clean Yamuna. Sachdeva said that we people of Delhi take about 70 per cent water of our requirement from Yamuna and pour all the filth of Delhi into Yamuna, that is why Yamuna is almost dead here and it is painful.

Delhi Jal Board will soon organise the second phase of Yamuna ki Pathshala involving school children to create awareness about cleaning of Yamuna. In the first phase 14097 students have been associated with the Yamuna cleaning campaign in the period of March 2022 to April 2023 through the "Yamuna Ki Pathshala" programme. To achieve this feat, "Yamuna Ki Pathshala" program has been organized in 543 schools so far. Delhi Jal Board had set a target of organizing "Yamuna Ki Pathshala" in 400 schools from March 2022 to April 2023.

Tutor, music composer held for Krishna Nagar double murders

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested a computer tutor and a budding music composer for killing a 73-year-old woman and her daughter in Delhi's Krishna Nagar area. The accused were identified as Kishan, a resident of Laxmi Nagar area, and Ankit Kumar Singh, a resident of Rukundipur near Siwan in Bihar. Both are cousins and the accused carried out the murders under "Mission Malamal", ostensibly aiming to become rich. Kishan was presently living in Laxmi Nagar, police said.

Singh is a singer and has a music band. He was composing lyrics and music for an upcoming film on over-the-top (OTT) platform, police said. Bodies of Rajrani (73) and her daughter Ginni Kiran (39) were found in a highly decomposed state and maggot-infested in Krishna Nagar on May 31, according to the police.

Police said the accused had contacted two advocates to seek legal advice before committing the crime.

On Wednesday, a person made a PCR call at 7.56 pm about a foul smell emanating



from a flat on the first floor of a building in Krishna Nagar's E Block, following which a police team rushed to the spot. Bodies of Rajrani and Kiran were found lying the house, which was ransacked.

During investigation, police analysed over 200 cameras of entry and exit routes of accused persons. The accused were seen entering a house after committing the crime. Police raided and found that it belonged to the prime accused, Kishan, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara) Rohit Meena said.

However, Kishan had come to know that the bodies of the women have been found and fled the house, he added. Call detail records confirmed that

the mobile phones of the victims as well as that of the accused were latched to the same tower in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, after the murders on May 25, the DCP said.

The accused switched off their mobile phones when they got to know that the police were chasing them, he said. They were planning to flee to Bihar and then to Assam. Police traced the location of Ankit Kumar Singh near BD Estate, Timarpur, and subsequently nabbed him, Meena said. The movement of Kishan was traced in Lucknow. He later came to Delhi and was apprehended from the Kanti Nagar area while he was preparing to surrender before the court, the DCP said.

Noted green campaigner Manoj Misra no more

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Renowned environmental activist and former Indian Forest Service officer Manoj Misra breathed his last at 12.40 pm on Sunday, leaving behind a legacy of battles fought to safeguard precious forests and rivers. He was 68.

Misra, who tested positive for COVID-19 on April 8, was undergoing treatment since April 10. The conservation community, including members of the Indian Forest Service fraternity, mourned his passing and hailed his tireless efforts to safeguard forests and rivers.

Delhi Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has expressed his shock and pain at Misra's "untimely demise". "He remained a warrior for the cause of environment and a son of river Yamuna, consistently striving for her revival. His passing away leaves us bereft of a valuable fellow traveler on path of rejuvenating Yamuna," Saxena said on Twitter.

Congress leader and former Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh expressed sadness at Misra's death and said, "Deeply distressed to learn of the passing away of Manoj Misra, an indefatigable environmentalist. He was particularly passionate about the protection of rivers and spent much of his time on the revival of the Yamuna." "He helped me in the drafting of the first set of rules for River Regulation Zone, much along



the lines of the Coastal Regulation Zone rules. Sadly, we still don't have enforceable RRZ rules."

Born in Mathura in Uttar Pradesh, Misra's early life was shaped by his love for nature and the environment. He pursued his education from Pant Nagar University in Uttarakhnad and later at Allahabad University.

In 1979, he joined the Indian Forest Service. He belonged to the Madhya Pradesh cadre and served in various capacities across the country. Misra opted for voluntary retirement in 2001.

In 2007, he founded the Yamuna Jiye Abhiyan, a movement dedicated to the revival of the river. Misra fought numerous legal battles to protect the Yamuna and its floodplains, taking a stand against the construction of a metro depot (2007), a Millennium Bus depot (2011), dumping of construction debris (2012), covering of stormwater drains (2013), pollution in the Hindon river (2014), construction of an elevated road without environmental study (2015) and a cultural festival organised by the Art of Living.

Shahbad dairy murder victim's internal organs left hanging out after attack: Post-mortem report

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The post-mortem report of the minor girl has revealed that she was left with her internal organs hanging out of her stomach after being stabbed for 16 times by the accused Sahil at Shahbad Dairy area of Delhi. The incident took place on May 28. The autopsy report revealed that her skull was broken into pieces and due to multiple stabbing by knife, her intestines also came out of the body.

It has been revealed in the post-mortem that Sahil's attacks were so severe and brutal, that victim's internal organs including the intestine came out, sources said.

According to sources, there were 16 deep wounds in Sakshi's body, with excessive bleeding leading to her death. "A total of 11 wounds were detected on her vital organs and that caused her death. Her left lung was punctured due to stabbing and her intestines were protruding from the body. There was a deep wound below the abdomen," claimed sources.

The report has revealed that accused Sahil had



stabbed her multiple times and then burged her head with a rock. Several stab wounds on the victim's body confirm the same. Some bones in the head region have also been found with cracks and injuries.

Out of the 16 stab wounds in the victim's body, maximum wounds are present from the shoulder to the hip region, the sources said.

Also, a number of bones in her body have been found in broken condition, showing the brutality of the killing. As per the doctors, this is the result of multiple brutal assaults on the victim's body by accused Sahil.

Embracing a Sustainable Future on World Environment Day

Delhi Development Authority

is organising

Plant for the Planet

plantation drive at Yamuna Vatiika
on the Floodplains of River Yamuna
(Another Permanent Ecological Asset being developed by DDA after successful development of Asita & Baansera)

Chief Guest

Sh. Vinai Kumar Saxena

Lieutenant Governor, Delhi

5th June 2023, 9:30 AM Yamuna Vatiika on the Floodplain of River Yamuna

DDA maintains 16000 acres of greens in the city

719 parks & greens of 10385 acres

7 Biodiversity Parks of 3527 acres

22 km long River Yamuna Floodplains of approx 3952 acres

Project Asita on the banks of River Yamuna is a restoration & rejuvenation project providing Delhiites with breathable public green space while maintaining the ecological character of the river flood plains.

Project Baansera is the Capital's first multipurpose socio-cultural & eco-tourism bamboo theme park on the Banks of Yamuna, having 25,000 Bamboo Trees that provide Oxygen, trap dust, generate employment & augment recreational public space in the City.

OTHER ACTIVITIES BEING ORGANISED BY DDA

Our Place in Nature	: Nature Walks, and understanding of the Ecosystem (in Collaboration with WWF) at Sanjay Van I 04:00 pm
Bagh Ghar Lao	: Plantation, Home and Community Composting Workshop, Painting Competition at District Park, Shalimar Bagh I 08:00 am
Chalo Safai Karein	: Clean the Forest at Jahanpanah City Forest I 08:00 am
Paint Your Environment	: Painting Workshop for Children at Kalindi Aviral on the Floodplains of River Yamuna I 04:00 pm
Bagh Ghar Lao	: Plantation, Kokedama, Painting Competition at District Park, B-Block, Janakpuri I 08:00 am
Bring Biodiversity Back	: Plantation, Talks, Nature Walks at Tilpath Valley, Yamuna Biodiversity Park, Aravalli Biodiversity Park, Kamla Nehru Ridge, Neela Hauz, Tughlaqabad Biodiversity Park, Kalindi Biodiversity Park

DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

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ODISHA TRIPLE TRAIN CRASH

Cong seeks Railway Min's resignation, slams Modi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday demanded the resignation of Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw over the Odisha rail tragedy and attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying he should accept part of the responsibility for creating an "all is well" facade even as the critical infrastructure of the Indian Railway "languishes in neglect".

The Opposition party asked whether the prime minister will take responsibility for the "deadliest rail tragedy" of this century. It also asked who is responsible for ignoring the warnings and suggestions of experts, the parliamentary committee and CAG report.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that Modi was busy flagging off trains while not paying attention to railway safety. He called for fixing accountability of all posts from top to bottom to prevent such incidents in future.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi too slammed the government and



said the prime minister should immediately seek the resignation of the railway minister.

"No accountability even after 270 plus deaths! The Modi government cannot run away from taking responsibility for such a painful accident," he said in a tweet in Hindi.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here, Congress MP Shaktisinh Gohil and AICC's publicity and media department head Pawan Kherra alleged that the Odisha rail tragedy was a "man-made devastation caused by utter neg-

ligence, serious lapses in the system, incompetence, and a narcissistic sense of know-it-all attitude of the Modi government".

Kherra said the prime minister has a "Kavach" which no other PM had, protecting him from public scrutiny and television debates. He urged the media to not provide that shield to the PM.

"This 'Kavach' does not save rail passengers but only your (PM's) image," Kherra said.

The Opposition party also said that Modi should accept part of the responsibility for the

"mess" that it alleged that his government has inflicted on the Indian Railways and the people.

Prime Minister Modi, who has announced that the guilty would be punished, must first start with his railway minister, Kherra said.

"Unequivocally and unambiguously, we demand the resignation of the Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. Nothing short of it," he said.

"Resignation means taking responsibility on moral grounds, here there is neither responsibility nor morals, do you think any resignation would come? We don't know whom we should ask for resignation. "The person who goes to inaugurate even small stations or the one who has been busy since yesterday morning in publicity, Modi ji, you decide whose resignation you want. But now the nation expects that you seek the resignation of your rail minister the way Lal Bahadur Shastri, Nitish Kumar and Madhavrao Scindia resigned," Kherra said.

"Praan jaye par PR na

jaye-- you have to leave this principle now," Kherra said further.

In a series of tweets in Hindi, Kharge posed questions to the Modi government and alleged that "PR gimmicks" have made the working system of the dispensation "hollow".

Noting that three lakh posts are vacant in the Railways, he said posts at high levels whose recruitment is through the Prime Minister's Office are also lying vacant. He asked why these posts were not filled in the last nine years.

The Railway Board itself has recently admitted that long working hours of loco pilots due to acute shortage of manpower is the main reason for the increasing number of accidents, the Congress president said and asked why the posts were not filled up.

Kharge claimed that the Principal Chief Operating Manager of South Western Railway Zone sought fixing of the signalling system on February 8, 2023, citing an incident in Mysore in which two trains averted a collision.

Stop politicising Balasore train accident, says BJP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday asked Opposition parties to not politicise the Balasore train accident and said the track record of the Congress-led UPA Government's railway ministers was nothing short of a disaster.

BJP IT department head Amit Malviya shared on Twitter what he said were the details of accidents under these ministers and added such "worthies" are the ones demanding the resignation of the "most qualified" railway minister the country has had in seven and half decades.

The Congress had earlier demanded the resignation of Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying he should accept part of the



responsibility for creating an all is well facade even as the critical infrastructure of the Indian Railways "languishes in neglect".

Hitting back, Malviya said, "Stop politicising the unfortunate Balasore tragedy because track record of railway ministers, under the UPA, to put it mildly, was nothing short of disaster. Let us focus on relief and rescue operation and putting life and rail back on track, at the earliest."

Under Mamata Banerjee as railway minister, 1,451 people died in 54 cases of collisions

and 839 incidents of train derailments, he said. Death toll was 1,159 when Lalu Yadav was the minister while the corresponding figure for Nitish Kumar was 1,527.

Yadav was the minister in the first term of the UPA government while Kumar was at the helm during the NDA government headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee. This is the report card of those demanding resignation, Malviya said.

Trinamool Congress supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Banerjee has been vocal in slamming the government over the accident.

Malviya alleged, "Banerjee's rise in politics has been over dead bodies. From Singur to post poll violence of 2021, all she has done is - indulged in dirty politics of death and destruction."

'Even ticketless travellers will receive compensation'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The railways on Sunday said that even ticketless travellers on board the passenger trains involved in the Odisha accident will receive compensation. This is in line with a Supreme Court order, officials said. "Irrespective of the passengers being ticketless (or not), they will receive compensation," railway spokesperson Amitabh Sharma said.

Speaking to reporters, Jaya Verma Sinha, Member of Operations and Business Development of the Railway Board, said that every patient admitted in hospitals have a scout or a guide with him to help his kin to track him.

Verma further said the helpline number 139 is available in which senior rail officers are answering calls and are trying to connect with as many people as possible.



"The family members of the injured or deceased can call us and we will make sure that they are able to meet them. We will take care of their journey and other expenses," she said.

The railways also said that the 139 service will continue uninterrupted and will ensure prompt disbursement of ex-gratia announced by the rail minister -- Rs 10 lakh in case of death, Rs 2 lakh for grievous injuries and Rs 50,000 for minor injuries.

So far, the railways has disbursed Rs 3.22 crore as ex-gratia in 285 cases -- 11 deaths, 50 grievous injuries and 224 minor injuries.

No intention to hide deaths: Govt on manipulation charge

People behind criminal act identified: Ashwini

PTI ■ NEW DELHI/BHUBANESWAR,

Even as the Indian Railways on Sunday virtually ruled out driver error and system malfunction, indicating a possible "sabotage" and tampering of the electronic interlocking system behind the triple train accident that claimed at least 288 lives in Odisha, the Chief Secretary of the State, PK Jena on Sunday said his Government has no intention to hide the deaths in the Balasore train crash and the entire rescue operation was being conducted in full public view.

Reacting to allegations that the death toll figure was being manipulated, he said Odisha believes in transparency. "Media persons are very

much present at the accident site since the beginning. Everything is being done in the presence of cameras," he said.

"The railways had stated the death toll as 288. We also said that, and the figure was based on the information from railway. But, our Balasore district collector has verified the death toll, and the figure was 275 till 10 am of Sunday," he said.

Asked about the change in the toll, Jena said it was due to double counting of some bodies.

The chief secretary said there was also no prohibition on the entry of media persons at the accident site. "The rescue and even restoration activities went on in full public view," he said.

West Bengal Chief Minister



Mamata Banerjee questioned the death figures, stating that 61 people from her state were dead and 182 were still missing.

"If from one state, 182 are missing and 61 are confirmed dead, then where would the figures stand?" she asked, addressing a press conference.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw declined to take any

questions from journalists in connection with Banerjee's allegation.

Of the 275 dead bodies, only 108 have been identified, the Chief Secretary said.

He said the State would like all the bodies to be identified so that those could be cremated by their families.

"Keeping in view the pre-

vailing hot weather, the bodies are decomposing fast. Therefore, the state can maximum wait for two more days before disposing of them as per the law," he said.

Meanwhile, earlier the Railways on Sunday virtually ruled out driver error and system malfunction, indicating a possible "sabotage" and tampering of the electronic interlocking system behind the triple train accident that claimed at least 288 lives in Odisha.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the "root cause" of the accident and the "criminals" responsible for it have been identified.

"It happened due to a change made in the electronic interlocking and point machine," he told reporters at the site of the accident in Balasore district.

Here in Delhi, top railway officials explained how the point machine and the interlocking system function.

They said the system is "error proof" and "fail safe" but did not rule out the possibility of outside intervention.

"It is called a fail safe system, so it means that even if it fails, all the signals will turn red and all train operations will stop. Now, as the minister said there was a problem with the signalling system. It could be that someone has done some digging without seeing the cables. Running of any machine is prone to failures," Jaya Verma Sinha, Member of Operation and Business Development, Railway Board, said.

A senior railway official who did not want to be identified said this kind of tinkering with the "logic" of the AI-based electronic interlocking system can only be "intentional" and ruled out any malfunction in the system.

The minister also said that the Commissioner of Railway Safety has completed an investigation and the report is awaited.

Rajnath to hold talks with US Def Secy today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and the US will review the entire gamut of their growing defence and strategic ties here on Monday during talks between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin. The next day, Rajnath will hold discussions here with German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius.

As reported earlier in *The Pioneer* edition dated May 27, Austin's visit comes days ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to the US on June 23. He is expected to discuss various aspects related to defence issues including access to cutting-edge technology from the US during talks with President Joe Biden.

Prime Minister Modi will



also address the joint session of the US Congress. He extended the invitation to him late Friday to address the Congress on June 22.

Modi will share his vision of India's future and speak on the global challenges facing the two countries, top Congressional leaders announced.

This will be the second time that Modi will be address-

ing a joint meeting of the US Congress. He addressed the US Congress during his visit to the US in June 2016.

Meanwhile, giving details of US Defence Secretary and German Defence Minister's visits, the defence ministry said here on Saturday a host of bilateral defence cooperation issues, with focus on industrial cooperation, are likely to be discussed during the two meetings.

Monsoon misses onset date in Kerala, IMD says conditions now favourable

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday predicts further three-four days delay in the arrival of southwest monsoon in Kerala. IMD had predicted the southwest monsoon to hit the coasts of Kerala by June 4. According to IMD, the southwest monsoon had reached the west side of Lakshadweep on June 3 but it did not have favorable conditions to move further from there.

The southwest monsoon normally sets in over Kerala on June 1 with a standard deviation of about seven days.

In a statement on Sunday, the IMD said, "Conditions (are) becoming favourable with the increase in westerly winds over the south Arabian Sea. Also, the depth of westerly winds is gradually increasing and today, June 4, the depth of westerlies has reached up to 2.1 kilometres



above the mean sea level.

"The cloud mass over the southeast Arabian sea is also increasing. We expect that these favourable conditions for monsoon onset over Kerala will further improve during the next three-four days. It is being monitored continuously and further updates will be provided tomorrow (Monday)."

Scientists, however, said the delay is unlikely to impact kharif sowing and total rainfall over the country.

The southeast monsoon arrived in the southern state on

May 29 last year, June 3 in 2021, June 1 in 2020, June 8 in 2019 and May 29 in 2018.

India is expected to get normal rainfall during the southwest monsoon season despite the evolving El Nino conditions, the IMD had earlier said.

Northwest India is expected to see normal to below normal rainfall.

East and northeast, central, and south peninsula are expected to receive normal rainfall at 94-106 per cent of the long-period average of 87 centimetres.

According to the IMD, rainfall between 96 and 104 per cent of a 50-year average of 87 cm is considered 'normal'.

Rainfall less than 90 per cent of the long-period average is considered 'deficient', between 90 per cent and 95 per cent is 'below normal', between 105 per cent and 110 per cent is 'above normal' and more than 100 per cent is 'excess' precipitation.

Check influx of illegal migrants from Myanmar into Manipur, demand civil society, students



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Members of Manipuri civil society and students' organisations on Sunday held a 'peace rally' at Jantar Mantar and demanded that the Government check the influx of "illegal migrants" into the State from Myanmar.

Organised under the banner of the Manipur Coordination Committee, a group of civil society organisations and students' groups, the protest was attended by around a thousand people. Amid chants of "Save Manipur, and 'Kuki Terrorists Go Back', victims of the recent violence in the state narrated their ordeal even as prominent members of the community shed light on the reasons behind the ongoing conflict between the Meitei and Kuki communities in Manipur.

Chan Meitei, a member of the committee, said the rally was held for peace in Manipur and to lodge a protest against the "divisive forces and external aggression" faced by people in the state.

The participants demanded that the government stop "illegal migrants" from Myanmar entering Manipur. "The illegal migrants from Myanmar are responsible for the unrest and violence faced by Manipur."

"They indulge in poppy cultivation that has also added to deforestation on the hills," said Joy, a medical student

from Thoibal in Manipur.

The committee members said the government should also check the violence by Kuki "militants" who migrated from Myanmar.

"All the stakeholders of Manipur are equally responsible to bring peace and development in the state. Manipuri Kukis are our relatives, brothers and sisters and we are not against them," said Prem Meitei, who also took part in the rally.

In a statement shared with the media, the organisation also blamed the Assam Rifles for supporting and protecting Kuki militant groups and allowing a section of the Kuki community to indulge in unlawful activities such as poppy cultivation and illegal immigration.

Many protesters said that despite Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit, the community was not feeling safe as the state administration and the armed forces were unable to protect them.

They said only the RSS had stood in support of the Meiteis as the Church was supporting the Kukis.

Protestors demanded that narco terrorism is a huge threat to national Security and there are enough evidence of armed militants involvement in SoO (Suspension of Operation) and other groups who are also not involved in SoO agreement to be directly involved and funding of poppy.

'Pandemic threat far from over'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Even as Covid cases continue to ebb for the past several weeks in the country, the Union Health Ministry on Sunday said the threat of pandemics is far from over and called for integrating and strengthening One Health-based surveillance system.

"The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted that partnerships are most fruitful only when developed during peacetime and not amidst an ongoing pandemic; and that we need to focus on creating resilient health systems, with primary health as its cornerstone," said Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Pravin Bharati while addressing the third health working group meeting under G20 India Presidency which began in Hyderabad on



Sunday.

India has recorded 202 new coronavirus infections, while the active cases have decreased to 3,343 from 3,502, according to the Ministry data updated on Sunday. The death toll has increased to 5,31,880 with two deaths, the data updated at 8 am stated. The active cases now comprise 0.01 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid-19 recovery rate has been recorded at 98.81 per cent, according to the health ministry website.

The Minister further stated that "partnership we share as

G20 members is vital and facilitates in building trust, sharing knowledge, creating networks and working together to achieve meaningful impact and results." The two-day meeting is being attended by top officials, representatives from the G20 member countries, special invitee countries, international organisations, forums and partners like WHO, World Bank and WEF.

Dr Pawar also highlighted the need for availability of safe, effective and quality medical countermeasures. Stating that India's G20 Presidency is working towards building consensus for an end-to-end Global Medical Countermeasure (MCM) ecosystem, following a Network of Networks approach and leveraging existing global and regional initiatives, Dr Pawar urged the leadership of G20 countries to create an

interim platform which will be guided by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) process and will feed into the same.

Acknowledging the convergence between G7 and G20 priorities, including the launch of MCM Delivery Partnership during Japan's G7 Presidency which aligns with G20's proposal of an end-to-end MCM ecosystem, Dr Pawar urged the global community to strengthen ongoing efforts in that direction. "Pandemics may not wait for the finalisation of the Pandemic Treaty and hence, the time to act is now," she stated.

Understanding the contribution of Indian traditional knowledge systems to healthcare, Union Minister of Tourism G Kishan Reddy stated that the Indian traditional knowledge system propagated preventive and holistic wellbeing for all.

Pregnant mothers' exposure to toxic metals may impact babies' kidney development: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pregnant mothers' environmental exposure to toxic metals may adversely impact kidney development in their babies which exhibits when they attain adulthood, a team of researchers have suspected as they sought to give a clue into the kidney ailments of unknown origins.

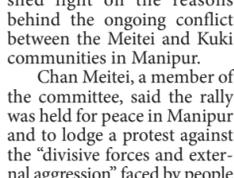
And it is more threatening, warned the researchers as they noted, "It's a kind of kidney disease occurring in younger people, and it is characterized by more rapid decline in kidney function.

People go from diagnosis to

death in 10 years."

The study holds importance for India too where kidney ailments are on increase but this link with toxic metals has not been ever considered. Usually, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and family history are attributed to the main risk factors for developing chronic kidney disease.

The researchers at the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health said that would be mom's exposure to toxic metals sets the stage for a problem that doesn't become apparent until the baby is an adult.



Army launches initiatives to counter terrorist propaganda

Pak using social media, local influencers, narcotics to radicalise Kashmiri youth: Army

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

Pakistan is using a mix of social media, local influencers and narcotics to radicalise the Kashmir youth to pick up the gun but Army has launched various people-friendly initiatives to counter the propaganda of the inimical elements, a senior army officer has said.

General Officer Commanding of Army's 15 Corps Lieutenant General ADS Aujla said the attempts from

across the Line of Control (LoC) to push narcotics was a cause of concern as it was destroying the future generation of Kashmir.

"Social media plays a very important role in this (radicalisation) and that is where the western adversary invests very heavily and that is where the narratives are built, the themes are built...Which then are let loose in the environment and caught out by the youngsters here," Lt Gen Aujla told PTI in an interview last week.

The officer, who has spent considerable part of his career in Jammu and Kashmir, said besides social media, the local cadres of Jamaat-e-Islami also play a major role in the indoctrination of the youth.

"The local Jamaatis, they also play the major role in radicalising the youngsters. So, a combination of both of these gives them (youths) this high of falling on a wrongful path or joining a tanzim or picking the weapon and doing something



wrong," he added.

Lt Gen Aujla said the youth of Kashmir are otherwise very focussed and brilliant minds.

"It is just that within a large society, there are certain inimical elements who do prey upon certain individuals who are very very vulnerable because of either education or the condition at home or because of the peer pressure. It is primarily the social

media, it is the Jamaatis who are there, and to a certain extent the peer group and a little bit about the narcotics which gets them on doing certain wrongs," he said.

Asked if the neighbouring country was using drones to deliver weapons and narcotics into Kashmir, the officer said terrain of the LoC in the valley makes it a difficult task.

"The geography actually

does not permit them to use this technology or equipment in this place. So, from that point, I think, we are decently immune. But, I cannot say for sure that they cannot be used. There are certain places where (they can), but we are pretty robust on ground to take care of any such misadventure by the enemy in this area," he said. Lt Gen Aujla said with the type of pressure that is being mounted by the investigating agencies like the NIA and the SIA on terror financing networks, the narcotics smuggling has become the source to finance the nefarious deeds on inimical elements.

"From where it was and where it is now, we have put a little bit of check on that, the lid has been put. The agencies and the

administration are pretty sensitive to it and many a methods, many a measures have been put in place to ensure that this particular trend is controlled and captured at the earliest," he added. The GoC said the narcotics were "ruining the system and the society". "As far as Kashmir is concerned, a lot of youngsters are getting into this kind of a business, both as carriers and in the consumption part as well. That is where some money comes back which is used by the tanzims to fund their designs," he said.

Lt Gen Aujla said 'Operation Sadbhavana' has been going on with the focus of the army on three major facets. "The first is education where we

put a lot of impetus, a lot of focus is there to enhance the educational reforms to give them top-notch education in whatever way is possible. That is where 28 Army goodwill schools are presently running in the Kashmir valley which is a huge number. It constitutes 11,000 students and if you add the staff, it comes to about 15,000. So, that is the type of families that we are associated with for a long period of time," he said.

The officer said the other aspect where the Army has invested very heavily is for deradicalisation part is the 'Sahi Rasta' (Right Path) programme where the people on the brink of joining terror ranks are brought back to the mainstream.

Triple train crash triggers political slugfest in WB

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

After Friday's Odisha train mishap came the Sunday's political slugfest among Bengal politicians with State Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari hitting out at Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for "forcibly carrying away" the injured passengers of the ill-fated Coromandel Express — that on Friday evening met with a catastrophic accident at Bahanaga off Balasore in Odisha — to Bengal which lacked basic health infrastructure.

"I strongly object to the way the Bengal Government is playing politics here by forcibly taking away the injured persons to Kolkata and other places of Bengal where there is jungle raj in the name of health facility... Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is playing with the lives of these hapless people for the sake of narrow politics," Adhikari who on Sunday visited the hospitals where the injured were being treated in Odisha said.

His fierce attack on the



Trinamool Congress chief and her Government came hours after Banerjee demanded Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav's resignation for failing to save so many lives. Close to 300 people perished and more than 1000 were seriously injured in the accident involving three trains out of which Chennai-bound Coromandel Express was the worst hit.

"When the Railways Ministry inspired by the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in close coordination with Government of Odisha has been doing marvelous work in rescuing and treating the operations There is no health facility in Bengal... or

else why lakhs of people visit Cuttack, Bhubaneswar and Vellore and other southern cities for treatment every year," Adhikari wondered.

Every year 10 lakh people go to Odisha and Vellore in South India for treatment and another 10 lakh migrate to southern States in search of jobs, both of which were poor advertisements of Bengal under Mamata Banerjee.

The BJP leader further said that he would not have raised such issues "but the way Mamata Banerjee attacked a gentleman like Mr Vaishnav who has done a great job in restoring the Railways to its glory I had to come out to speak the truth."

With Balasore being a border district scores of injured people were being ferried away for treatment to Kolkata by the ambulances sent in by the Bengal government. Many of these people were presently being treated in SSKM Hospital, NRS and RG Kar Medical Colleges in the Bengal Capital.

Director Rajasenan quits BJP in Kerala, join CPI(M)

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

BJP in Kerala has started withering before taking roots in the State as infighting in the party reached a crescendo. Rajasenan, maker of many hit movies and known by the name Man With Midas Touch, who had been with the BJP for the last seven years left the Hindutva brigade and joined the CPI(M) late Saturday evening.

Rajasenan's action comes weeks after Mohan Lal, the Malayalam super star who is known for his soft Hindutva line, refused to screen the pro-BJP movie Kerala Dairy in theatres owned by him. His decision earned the wrath of another superstar Srinivasan, a CPI-M sympathizer, that Lal was ungrateful to his political masters.

"I wasted seven years of my life by being with the BJP. Since the day I joined the BJP, I lost many film projects and most of my colleagues started avoiding me. Though I worked



hard from my side, the party's State leadership put a veil between me and the central leadership," Rajasenan told The Pioneer.

He also said that the leadership of the Kerala BJP has been left without any clue of what to do in the present situation. Dr Jacob Thomas IPS and former Director General of Police, who too had joined the party after retirement from Government service is likely to follow suit. "If the party leadership does not want my services, what I am supposed to do? The BJP leaders should know how to make my services effectively," Dr Thomas told The Pioneer.

Elsewhere in the State the BJP is fast losing whatever acceptance it had among the people. Last week the BJP failed to win at least a single seat in the bye elections held to some of the local bodies. The party lost all the seats which it was holding while the UDF and LDF walked away with the honors.

The recent past saw the State BJP chief K Surendran sidelining many leaders like Sandeep Varrier and P Sivasankaran. "Surendran is suffering from inferiority complex as he himself knows that he does not have the capability to lead the party," said a senior BJP activist.

We brought it down, says Bihar Govt as bridge under construction falls



PTI ■ KHAGARIA

An under-construction bridge over the Ganga river collapsed in Bihar on Sunday, portions of which were deliberately destroyed in a planned fashion under expert advice as it had design flaws, claimed State Government officials. The bridge was supposed to connect Khagaria district with Bhagalpur. Images of the mishap that took place in Khagaria evoked immediate criticisms from the Opposition, prompting Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav and Additional Chief Secretary of Road Construction Department, Pratyay Amrit, to hold a hurried

press conference. "It may be recalled that a portion of this bridge had collapsed on April 30 last year. We had, thereafter, approached IIT-Roorkee, which is esteemed for its expertise in construction matters, to conduct a study. It is yet to come up with a final report but experts who had studied the structure had informed us that there were serious defects," Yadav said at the press conference.

Amrit, who took over, added, "It was decided that we must not take any chance and wait for a final report. So we went ahead with pulling down parts of the bridge. Today's incident was a part of such a preventive exercise"






“ We will be able to give a safe environment to our coming generations only when every citizen of the country makes a united effort to maintain the balance of water, air and land. - Narendra Modi ”



World Environment Day
June 5, 2023



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A national tragedy

The Balasore accident is a grim reminder to the fact that a lot needs to be done to make rail journey safe

The triple train accident in Balasore, Odisha serves as a poignant reminder of the urgent need for comprehensive reforms in our railway infrastructure. The lives tragically lost in this accident should serve as a catalyst for change. The recent train accident with more than 300 lives lost has plunged our nation into a state of shock and grief. The loss of numerous lives and the profound impact on families and communities serve as a stark reminder of the pressing need to address the safety concerns that continue to plague our railway infrastructure. It is crucial that we not only investigate the causes of this tragic incident but also take decisive action to prevent such accidents in the future. Now that Ashwini vaishnav has stated that the cause of accident was an error in advance signalling system, the sabotage angle is ruled out. But it raises concerns about the state of the railways and how serious is the government about the lives of the people. This calamity has not only disrupted the lives of the victims and their families but has also exposed the vulnerabilities inherent in our railway system. While a comprehensive investigation is currently underway to ascertain the precise causes of the accident, it is evident that several factors have contributed to such incidents. Inadequate maintenance of tracks and signalling systems, human error, overburdened infrastructure, and insufficient implementation of safety protocols are among the key factors that demand our immediate attention.



To chart a path forward, we need a concerted effort by authorities. A slew of measures must be prioritized so that such incidents do not repeat. There is an urgent need to prioritize the modernization and upgradation of railway infrastructure. The 'Kavach system' for ensuring zero accidents must be implemented across the country. This encompasses regular maintenance of tracks, bridges, and signalling systems, as well as the adoption of advanced technologies to monitor and control train operations. Besides, stringent safety protocols and guidelines must be implemented throughout the entire railway network. This includes strict adherence to speed limits, regular training of railway staff, and the deployment of advanced safety mechanisms such as automatic braking systems and collision avoidance technologies. Additionally, conducting regular safety audits and inspections will aid in identifying and rectifying potential hazards. But this brings us to an important aspect and that is about the prioritising the resources. We all know that railways needs lots of funds for its upkeep, maintenance and modernisation. The resources are limited and they must be judiciously used to provide the safety and security to the passengers rather than spending them on big ticket projects like bullet trains and a few high speed trains which would mostly be used by a very small population whereas the general trains serves most of the people. It is high time the government did risk-cost analysis to allocate its funds so that such incidents are not repeated.

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PICTALK



Devotees gather at the Lord Jagannath Temple for the Snan Purnima rituals, in Puri

Will freebies sink Karnataka?

Karnataka's debt has been increasing at double the rate of its GSDP, which makes it unsustainable. Freebies will put an extra burden on its economy



GOVIND BHATTACHARJEE

Lots have been written on the Karnataka election results. There have been threadbare analyses of why the BJP has lost the elections despite the strong economic performance of the state, how the people have expressed their anger over high prices and perceived corruption and how this emphatic victory for the Congress after a prolonged dry spell has re-energised its demoralised cadres while fostering opposition unity by showcasing a new winning formula. This high hope may yet prove to be elusive. Karnataka is a paradox of sorts - in other developed states, economic stability generally brings political continuity, but Karnataka defies this trend. During the last 35 years from 1988, the State had as many as 18 different governments, and been under the President's rule four times, while the state has continued to grow all the while. The change of government at every election is a fact of this, and need not be an indicator of people's disenchantment with any party or government.

Now that the dust has settled, the government has begun to focus on the business of governance and on fulfilling its election promises. In one of the first decisions taken by the Siddaramaiah government, the cabinet has cleared the implementation of the party's five election guarantees promised to voters in its election manifesto. These are Gruha Jyoti to provide 200 units of free power to all households, Gruha Laskshmi to pay Rs 2,000 monthly assistance to the woman head of every family, Anna Bhagya to provide 10 kilograms of rice free to every member of a below poverty line (BPL) household, Yuva Nidhi to pay Rs 3,000 every month to unemployed graduate youth and Rs 1,500 for unemployed diploma holders aged 18-25 for two years, and finally, Shakti to allow free travel for women in public transport.

There are many other populist promises in the manifesto, like filling up vacancies in all government departments within a year. Given that a third of



the total 769,000 government jobs are lying vacant, this will be challenging not only to recruit but also to pay. The poll manifesto also promised to "sympathetically consider extension of OPS (Old Pension Scheme) to pensionable staff who joined service after 2006", which will make it the sixth Indian state to have reverted to the OPS after Rajasthan, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, all ruled by the opposition.

The manifesto has further promised to increase public health expenditure to 5 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in line with the recommendations of the National Health Policy. It would be interesting to know where they would get the resources for all this, about which, of course, the manifesto is blissfully silent. In our politics, votes are all that matters and any cost to purchase them is never too high. This winning formula is sure to be applied with increasing vigour in the upcoming elections in MP, Telangana, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh, and even the BJP may be forced to join the bandwagon. It would be interesting to see their impact on the state and national finances.

THE PROSPEROUS STATE OF KARNATAKA WILL SINK DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO DEBT WHICH WILL SEVERELY RESTRICT ITS CAPITAL OUTLAY, THEREBY AFFECTING ITS FUTURE GROWTH

The Economic Survey of Karnataka for FY 2021-22 aspired to make Karnataka a trillion-dollar economy by 2032, when India's GDP is likely to be 10 trillion dollars. Currently, Karnataka's economy as measured by its GSDP is only around \$260 billion. To reach the target of \$1 trillion by 2032, it needs to grow at an annual compound average rate (CAGR) of 15 per cent annually, a difficult but not impossible target if the finances are managed well. Last year, its nominal GSDP grew by 14 per cent. Its per capita income of around \$4000 is almost twice that of India and is among the top five states of India. But the high income conceals its skewed distribution - services claim two-thirds of its GSDP - which is a product of its digital economy worth \$60 billion largely centred around the capital Bengaluru.

Karnataka's prosperity hides its severe indebtedness, an outcome of its populist culture. In 2017-18, Karnataka gave a farm loan waiver for Rs 18000 crore which was expanded to Rs 44000 in the next fiscal. No other state has given such a huge largesse to farmers. In FY 21, its fiscal deficit (FD) of Rs 67,098 crore was 3.7 per cent of its GSDP of Rs 18 lakh

crore. The high FD ratio understandably was a result of Covid-19 due to which its limit was raised from 3 to 5 per cent by the Karnataka Fiscal Responsibility Act. Its outstanding liability of Rs 4.3 lakh crore was almost 24 per cent of GSDP.

Karnataka's debt has been increasing at almost double the rate of its GSDP, which makes it fundamentally unsustainable. Its interest payment at 14.95 per cent of revenue receipt already was way above the fiscal consolidation target of 9.15 per cent prescribed by the Fifteenth Finance Commission. The manifesto guarantees and freebies will cost the exchequer an estimated Rs 62000 crore, more than the estimated fiscal deficit of Rs 60581 crore, or 2.6 per cent of GSDP, for FY23.

This means that the prosperous state will sink deeper and deeper into debt which will severely restrict its capital outlay, thereby affecting its future growth. But good economics has never been good politics in Indian states, and perhaps will never be.

(The author, is a former Director of General CAG and is currently a Professor at the Arun Jaitley National Institute of Financial Management)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NEW PRESIDENT OF AIMPLB

Sir - Maulana Khalid Saifullah Rahmani has been unanimously elected as the fifth President of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) in a meeting in Indore. He will be the successor of Maulana Sayed Rabey Hasani Nadwi who passed away in April. It is a good step taken by AIMPLB. Maulana Rahmani has a long experience working with AIMPLB and he has rendered his services for AIMPLB as a general secretary in the best way as well as he is a cognitive personality among Indian Muslims. It will be advantageous for AIMPLB and all Indian Muslims to have him as the President of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board.

Hassan Khan | Mumbai

DISPLACING THE STATUES

Sir - Opposition parties criticized, targeted and attacked the Ekanth Shinde-led Maharashtra government for displacing the statues of Ahilyabai Holkar and Savitribai Phule two of Maharashtra's most iconic and inspirational women at the Maharashtra Sadan in New Delhi, in order to make room for photos of V.D. Savarkar for his 140th birth anniversary celebrations on May 28. The NCP (Nationalist Congress Party) along with other alliance partners held protests in Mumbai on Monday, May 30, against the removal of the statues and demanded an apology for disrespecting Phule and Holkar. It is a great insult that the statues of Kranti Jyoti Savitribai Phule and Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar were removed as they were the inspiration to the entire society. They must apologize to the people of the state for this. The administration at New Delhi's Maharashtra Sadan seems to have gone on the back foot after protesters hit the streets in Mumbai against the removal of the statues of Holkar, a reformist Maratha ruler, and Phule, a pioneer of women's education in the country, who was earlier insulted by former Maharashtra gov-

The triple train tragedy



The triple train tragedy at Odisha's Balasore highlighted the deficiencies in Railway anti-accident mechanism. A lot of lives had been lost due to this tragic accident of trains colliding. Horrifying scenes of bloodstained debris and bogies part were seen everywhere around, the awful incident comes a jerk to the nation. The deadliest incident in the history of Indian railways. The extent of a train derailment and its collision with one good train and another Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express is so much that the death toll had raised above 1000. So many world leaders paid their condolence to the families of affected and injured people in those accidents.

Indian Railways being one of the largest railways networks in the world, still lacks a qual-

ity anti-accident mechanism which could possibly be a better option to evade such collisions. Also, most of our railway tracks are much older with limited track maintenance and are possible invitees for accidents. It is since many times, minor accidents of particularly super fast trains had been reported vis-a-vis Vande Bharat Express accidents, how not much heed had been paid to these minor accidents reported from different locations.

As India is moving towards the superfast Speed variants of Trains with Vande Bharat-like models, it is also crucial to scrutinize where centuries-old laid tracks are much for to allow such superfast trains to run with the speed of greater numbers. Also, 90 percent of Indian trains lack anti-collision mechanisms, and third and the most severe issue is that still more than 50 per cent of our railway tracks are open and are not separated from mainland cities. The track maintenance workforce ratio is also meagre compared to the stretch of Indian Railways' length and breadth.

This accident must not be granted only as a bad day and don't be forgotten as a mere bad memory, rather the Railway authorities must learn a lesson from it, by correcting all the faults and working ahead for more safety of Indian passengers.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

ernor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari. The move has also led to a head-on confrontation between the BJP and the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA).

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

NEW PARLIAMENT, NEW OPTIMISM

Sir - On Sunday PM Narendra Modi termed the new parliament building as a temple of democracy and a representation of the aspirations of 140 cr Indians and said that the structure will bear witness to a new dawn of a self-reliant India as it evolves into a developed nation. Every decision taken amid the four walls of the new structure, he expressed hope

and optimism, would impact the lives of the further generations and those who are deprived and disadvantaged.

Indeed it's a glad sense of relief that a new Parliament House has been built, but all the opposition leaders avoided participating in its inauguration ceremony and blamed right-wing parties for being regional identity. In my opinion, the inauguration of the new Parliament should be away from sects, divisions and denominations.

Md Ismayeel | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Towards more pragmatic international relations

Most of the international relations issues have their connection with envy. It is high time world leaders put a mechanism of envy admiration in place

The penchant towards over-preponderance for power during the 1950s resulted in numerous conflicts between states in International politics. The initial phase of the cold war saw the sudden emergence of a number of coalitions/groupings like NATO, SEATO, and CENTO from the western Group led by the US and the Warsaw Pact of Eastern Block mainly centred around pure military might leading virtually to a war-like situation. The ideological differences between Capitalism and Communism resulted in a complete trust deficit and lack of cooperation. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 International Relations changed into a unipolar world dominated by a single most potent centre of power with the emergence of a few countries with approximately similar capabilities to influence world politics. This resulted in the decline of ideological-based rivalries and the rise of interest-based relations where there are no permanent friends and enemies and the beginning of a new era of more pragmatic and flexible



IR involving conscious attempts towards more pertinent issues such as political development and modernisation.

The post-1991 witnessed tremendous change on account of LPG (Liberalization, Privatisation and Globalization) creating a background for a multifaceted International process involving frequent shifts leading to a period of transition between traditional to modern societies despite maintaining significant regularities and similarities despite differences.

There appears to be a visible shift towards building exogenously influenced social interaction without affecting the question of identity through a latent process of interdependence communication due to mushrooming of MNCs across the globe. The steep rise in multiple

channels of communication and multifaceted interdependence ranging from an economic, healthy environment and lurking problem of scarcity of water has gradually blurred the difference between national and international politics.

Issues such as the regional conflict in West Asia the Ukraine -Russian War, the expansionist mission of China and the rising tide of transnational terrorism have once again proved that peace, harmony and equality among nations are mere ideas.

The reality of world politics still revolves around human nature as propounded by Thomas Hobbes (nasty, selfish and intentionally governed by greed and fear) and tacit explanation of envy by Bertrand Russell in his renowned work "Conquest of Happiness" holding "competition, anxiety and envious nature mainly responsible for problems.

Russell concedes that "envy is the most unfortunate; not only does the envious person wish to inflict misfortune and do so whenever he can with impunity, but he is also himself rendered unhappy

by envy. Instead of deriving pleasure from what he has, he derives pain from what others" Ultimately this makes relations highly toxic among nations finally leading them into a gyre for competition and struggle for power.

The concept of security needs to be understood in the context of economic, energy, environmental, food security, cyber-security, institutional security, health security and women's security. Nevertheless, still, the issues like funding terrorist activities, policing cooperation and dealing with cyber threats through enhancing technological innovation and tightening border and maritime security information-gathering exercises are among the top priority areas of any country. About 50 per cent of international relations problems have their direct or indirect connection with envy and it is high time countries of the world take a cue from Russell's philosophical discourse that finds the solution of envy in admiration.

(The author, a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav award is a professor and an expert on strategic affairs)



SUDHIR HINDWAN



FIRST COLUMN

PLASTIC PLANET TO A PLASTIC-FREE PLANET

Reversal of climate change has to be a priority as we have only one planet to live



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

Every year on 5th June we remember our environment, due to the environment day celebration conducted under the auspicious of the United Nations. The theme for World Environment Day 2023 is "Beat Plastic Pollution". In India, World Environment Day 2023 will be celebrated with a focus on the Mission LiFE, which stands for Lifestyle for Environment, as envisioned by our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow. He has given a clarion call to adopt sustainable lifestyle practices. A sustainable lifestyle is possible only if humans live in tune with nature.

Today the barrier between nature and humans is plastic. Every day human life is so impregnated with plastic that we find it difficult to find independence from it. Plastic as such is not a bad invention. It has made human life easier. Nobody in the present generation can think of carrying drinking water in large cans during our train journey. The invention of plastic has made human life more light by making lightweight comfortable household articles. It has truly revolutionized human civilization.

Plastic is a synthetic material made from polymers, which are long chains of molecules. It is a versatile material that can be moulded and shaped into various forms when heated and then cooled. Plastics are commonly derived from petroleum, although they can also be made from other sources like natural gas or renewable materials. Plastic, as we know it today, is the result of the contributions of several inventors and researchers since 1862 when Alexander Parkes invented the first synthetic plastic.

The over-dependence on plastic has changed the structure of our planet itself. Every part of our planet air, water and land is polluted by plastic. Every year, more than 400 million tonnes of plastic are made, and about half of them are made to be used only once. Less than 10% of that is reused or recovered. Between 19 and 23 million tonnes of trash end up in lakes, rivers, and the ocean.



Plastic pollution has severe consequences for ecosystems and the environment. This accumulation disrupts ecosystems, harms wildlife, and threatens biodiversity. Recent scientific studies have shown the presence of plastic, known as microplastic in human breast milk and blood, making this a serious threat to look into. Microplastics are tiny plastic particles that are less than 5 millimeters in size. Studies have shown that some plastic materials, including polypropylene baby bottles and polyethylene terephthalate tea bags, can shed microscopic and nanoscale particles into heated liquids. An average person drinking three regular cups of tea or coffee daily, in a paper cup, would be ingesting 75,000 tiny microplastic particles. Microplastics even affect soil micro and macrofauna.

If we didn't take strict measures to control plastic pollution, it would soon make our planet a plastic one, without any regeneration potential that is needed for the survival of life. A celebration like a world environment day would at least make us think of this menace at least for a day. The celebration should not be limited to publicity stunts by institutions and agencies. What is needed is a long-term initiative with collective commitment from individuals, businesses, governments, and organizations and a transition to a more sustainable and circular economy. By taking collective action and making conscious choices of living sustainably with nature, we can make a significant impact in beating plastic pollution and moving towards a more sustainable future.

(The writer is a science communicator and columnist)

An unfinished task of social justice politics

Caste inequality and caste census must be considered in policy discourse; caste inequality is a reality of Indian society that cannot be ignored



KC TYAGI



PANKAJ CHAURASIA

On June 12 in Patna, CM Nitish Kumar will meet with regional opposition parties from across the nation. Nitish Kumar has extended an invitation to all regional and Congress parties to unite for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh confirmed that the Congress will join this opposition unity party. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi may also be in the presence. In this meeting, regional parties engaged in social justice politics in the country, which are regarded as having a strong influence in their respective states, and which have long demanded an increase in the reservation, a caste census, etc., are expected to attend.

In light of the recent victory of the Congress in Karnataka based on its commitment to the promotion of social justice, it is unsurprising that these issues will be brought up again in this meeting. Moreover, the recent victory of the Congress in Karnataka proves that these concerns will play a significant role in the upcoming national poll. Is about to engage in conflict. The Congress has received 43% of the vote in the state, its greatest percentage since the 1989 assembly elections. Comparing 2018 to 2019, BJP lost only 0.2% of the vote, so Karnataka's victory has cost BJP, but its Most Backward Caste's vote bank remains with it, making the Lok Sabha 2024 election difficult for Congress without the assistance of the regional parties. If the Congress wishes to win the election, it must unite with the regional parties of the country and campaign on their social justice politics.

In addition, Congress and regional parties should ensure the participation of the most backward castes so that they can trust the opposition parties and make a strategy to fight the elections with local issues. The people of Karnataka have taught the BJP what they need to know by defeating them and have given Congress a resounding mandate by favouring social justice politics. The promise that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi made in Kolar, "Jitni Aabadi, Utna Haq," must be maintained until the elections. If Congress wishes to win the elections, it should not evade the topics discussed at the opposition Ekta Dal meeting convened by Nitish Kumar. In addition to the opposition parties Congress, TMC, NCP, RJD, and Shiv Sena, many other opposition parties have accused the central government of misusing the ED, CBI, and other central investigative agencies for several years.

The regional parties will retain these issues to surround and defeat the BJP at the national level. In the Karnataka elections, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi campaigned for social justice in hopes of completely changing the party's image. This initiative did not begin with this election; rather, the Congress Party laid the groundwork for it during the 85th session of the Congress in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. This is why there were hints that the Congress would be shedding its previous image and debuting a fresh one. After a court in Surat found Rahul Gandhi guilty of disrespecting OBCs and disqualified him from the Lok Sabha for his "Modi surname" comment, the issue got even more attention. Rahul Gandhi reiterates the call



THE CONGRESS AND REGIONAL PARTIES SHOULD ENSURE THE PARTICIPATION OF THE MOST BACKWARD CASTES SO THAT THEY CAN TRUST THE OPPOSITION PARTIES AND MAKE A STRATEGY TO FIGHT THE ELECTIONS WITH LOCAL ISSUES

(KC Tyagi is ex-MP and Chaurasia is a research fellow at Jamia Millia Islamia University)



for caste census & proportionate reservation "Jitni Abadi Utna Haq".

It indicates an identity group should get promotions proportional to their population share. The huge discrepancy in caste representation in professional success is not due to chance. In empirical terms, caste stands out as the most statistically significant factor that determines professional success within Indian society. After 30 years of implementation of the Mandal Commission, once again the discussion of social justice is gaining momentum in national politics, and this discussion is moving forward with the caste census in its new form. Bihar's CM, Nitish Kumar, has emerged as its major leader. The chief ministers of more than a dozen states in the country started demanding a caste-based census. The Patna High Court on May 4 stayed the caste-based census in its interim order while hearing a petition challenging and seeking an interim stay on the caste survey in Bihar. Despite this, the caste-based census has brought the entire opposition on one platform and has worked to increase the discourse on the politics of social justice for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Caste inequality is a reality of Indian society that cannot be ignored even presently; therefore, why are caste inequality and caste census not considered in policy discourse? Since the year

1931, the Government of India has been continuously conducting the caste census of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes then what is the reason that the government is nervous about counting the rest of the castes? Perhaps the main reason for this is that the OBC community is not homogeneous, nor is politics dominated by people from these oppressed caste groups. Many castes in the OBCs, like Nishad, Bind, Mallah, Kewat, Kashyap, Bhar, Dhivar, Batham, Machua, Prajapati, Rajbhar, Kahar, Pottar, Dhimar, Manjhi, Barai, Lohar, and so on, have been victims of social injustice for a long time. This is the reason why these castes began voting for the BJP for their representation; if these castes are given appropriate representation, they will depart from the BJP and vote for opposition parties. The only Dalit member of the Mandal Commission, L. R. Naik, gave a dissenting note to divide the OBC reservation into two equal parts. L. R. Naik believed that within the OBCs there is an agricultural class, and another is the artisans' class that earns their livelihood from handicrafts, craftsmen, and horticulture. These castes are mostly landless, and after globalization in the 1990s, markets and technology have taken away their livelihood options, making their economic and educational status worse than Dalit castes. Special oppor-

tunities should be provided for the economic and educational upliftment of these classes. The Mandal Commission report was implemented, and its benefits were given to the agricultural castes, but not to the artisans and horticulture castes. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the needs of the most backward castes at the national level so that they can rely on opposition parties.

Before starting the neo-social justice mission, Congress and other regional parties should first understand the problem of OBCs and consider the question of proportional representation for most backward castes along with the caste census. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has identified the politics of social justice for OBCs in the Karnataka elections, but Congress and regional parties could not grasp what was required of most backward castes in 2023, which remain the main voter base of the BJP. If regional parties and Congress parties contemplate proportional representation of these most backward castes and caste census, Congress may gain a wider lead in the next Lok Sabha election. American philosopher John Rawls says about justice that justice for one may not be justice for someone else. So, political parties should make sure that all castes are properly represented in terms of social justice and their growth so that everyone can grow.

Ensuring a green and lean public transport system for Delhi

In the interplay between emission management and monetary returns, cost-effectiveness is a critical issue in the metric of a transport system

On this World Environment Day, we revisit the imperative to balance the rising transportation needs of a growing population in the capital city of Delhi with the mandate to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) vehicular emissions to contain the skyrocketing pollution levels in the city. The instrumental role played by an efficient transport system in the growth of a city is indisputable, as it is one of the key defining features of an agglomeration economy. If the city is taken as a metaphor for life, its transport network is the blood that keeps this life running.

In this context, the public transport system in Delhi has frequently come under the scanner. The fact that its residents spend a large part of



ANUPMA MEHTA



SANJIB POHIT

(Anupma Mehta is Editor and Sanjib Pohit is the Professor at the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER). Views are personal)

their daily lives on its congested and polluted roads while commuting between their homes and workplaces does little to assuage this concern.

The public transport in the metropolis includes the Delhi Metro, buses, three-wheelers, cycle-rickshaws, e-rickshaws, and taxis. Among these, the Delhi Metro, since its inception over 25 years ago, has proved to be one of the most popular and viable means of transport in the city. While easing travel and reducing traffic on the roads, it has also significantly helped curb pollution in the capital. It is estimated that every commuter who chooses the Delhi Metro over an on-road vehicle contributes to an emission reduction of about 100 mg of carbon dioxide for an average trip of 10Km.

However, in the complex interplay between emission management and actual monetary returns, cost-effectiveness is a critical issue in the overall efficiency metric of a transport system. And the Delhi Metro has some ground to cover on this metric. Comparisons with other cities show that, for its size, the Delhi Metro carries far fewer riders than almost any other city's system. According to data collected just before the pandemic, it had a daily rider average of 2.8 million travelling on a 314-km track. Compare this with corresponding figures for other cities—the smaller metro system of 286 km in China's Shenzhen city was carrying 60 per cent more riders, at 4.5 million. The even smaller metro system of Mexico

City, with a track of 226 km, too carried more than 4 million riders daily. And Singapore, with less than two-thirds of Delhi's track length at that time, at 199 km, accounted for a ridership of 3.1 million, 10 per cent higher than that of Delhi.

Despite its efficiency in terms of man and time management, the low passenger-track ratio of the Delhi Metro is, therefore, a puzzle that needs to be solved. One reason could be its relatively high fares, which may be beyond the means of a low-income commuter. A recent Centre for Science and Environment study revealed that among leading Metros across the world, the Delhi Metro remains the second-most unaffordable system in terms

of the percentage of income spent for using it. Thus, an unskilled daily-wage labourer in Delhi spends an average of 8 per cent of his income by travelling on a non-AC bus, 14 per cent on an AC bus, and 22 per cent on the Delhi Metro.

Such a situation underscores the need for developing other modes of green public travel in the city, and electric vehicles (EVs) are ostensibly stepping in to bridge this gap. With their promise of zero emissions, cleaner production techniques, and use of eco-friendly materials, EVs offer hope of controlling both air and noise pollution. According to the Indian Network on Climate Change Assessment (INCCA), India is the third largest emitter of CO2 in the world.

Official data on automobile sales shows that they accounted for 55 per cent of all such vehicles registered in Delhi since January 2023. The bulk of these EVs are two-wheelers, with as many as 1,745 electric two-wheelers having been registered, as of 14 March 2023. And therein lies another puzzle. One of the biggest challenges in the use of e-scooters pertains to their transportation and recharging system. The dockless e-scooters have to be dispatched to and collected from the charging spots using trucks, which will continue to emit CO2. How can we then strike a balance between meeting the increased transportation needs of Delhi while curtailing environmental pollution? The answer may perhaps lie

in traversing the middle path, such as the adoption of principles of the Mission Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE), announced by Prime Minister Modi at the 2021 Glasgow UN Climate Change Conference. Mission LiFE is based on the concept of ushering in behavioural change, supported by policy measures and infrastructural development.

The Government would also do well to prevent cluttering Delhi's roads with EVs before putting in place a fully functional infrastructure for shifting from fossil to renewable energy sources. Only such a cohesive balance between the use of multiple modes of transport can usher in a green and lean transit system in the national capital.

'Imran likely to be tried in military court'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said the chances were that former prime minister Imran Khan could be tried in a military court for his alleged involvement in the May 9 incidents in which military and state installations were attacked by his party workers, according to a media report on Sunday.

Khan, 70, could stand trial in a military court if evidence of his involvement in the May 9 violence surfaced in the coming days, Asif was quoted as saying by The Express Tribune newspaper.

He also confirmed that no case had been registered against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief so far in connection with the May 9 attacks.

"Definitely...there are chances that Imran Khan can be tried in a military court," the minister said while responding to a question if the deposed premier could be prosecuted

under the Army Act.

His remarks came days after Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said that Khan will be tried in a military court as the former prime minister was the "architect" of the May 9 incidents.

Khan's party found itself in hot waters when protesters allegedly belonging to the party attacked civil and military properties on May 9 following the arrest of Khan in the Al-Qadir corruption case.

The trial of people involved in the attacks on military installations in different parts of the country, including the attack on General Headquarters in Rawalpindi as well as Lahore's Jinnah House where the Corps Commander was residing, has already begun.

Earlier, Asif was reported as saying that no decision had been made in connection with trying the cricketer-turned-politician under the Army Act but he had not ruled out that



possibility on the grounds that Khan was the mastermind behind the May 9 violence and knew everything about what was happening on that day.

Both the defence and interior ministers' statements hinting at Khan's trial in a military court stem from the federal cabinet's decision that the protesters who vandalised military installations on May 9 would be tried under the Army Act and Official Secrets Act. The gov-

ernment ministers have repeatedly said that no new military courts would be established and the suspects would be tried in the "special standing courts" that were already functioning under the Army Act.

Army Chief General Asim Munir also said perpetrators, planners and executors of the May 9 attacks would be tried under the Army Act and Official Secret Act, adding that no leniency would be shown to those who attacked the military installations.

Khan denied his involvement in the violence, saying he was in jail when the incidents took place. He has said that the establishment plans to keep him in jail for 10 years in a sedition case.

On May 9, violent protests erupted after the arrest of Khan 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. 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.

Police put the death toll in violent clashes to 10 while Khan's party claims 40 of its workers lost their lives in the firing by security personnel.

The Punjab Police had previously claimed, citing a geofencing report, that Khan and his close aides allegedly coordinated efforts to storm the residence of the Lahore Corps Commander and other buildings.

'Pak to imprison women behind attacks on military for 10 years'

PTI ■ LAHORE

The women supporters of ousted Pakistan premier Imran Khan who have been arrested in connection with arson attacks on military installations will be jailed for 10 years for their "unpardonable crime", a senior official has said.

Addressing the media here on Saturday evening, Prime Minister's Special Assistant Attaullah Tarar told reporters that a joint investigation team has been formed to find out the mastermind of those attacks.

"All those including women involved in attacks on military installations will be handed down a severe punishment," he said.

"The women who attacked the military installations on May 9 will get a punishment of 10 years as their crime is unpardonable," Tarar said.

Widespread violence erupted in Pakistan after Khan was arrested by paramilitary personnel outside the Islamabad High Court on May 9. The 70-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief was later released on bail.

Over 20 military installations and government buildings, including the military headquarters in Rawalpindi, were damaged or torched in the violence that ensued from Khan's arrest. Over 100 vehicles of police and other security agencies were set on fire.

Law enforcement agencies have arrested over 10,000 workers of Khan's PTI party across Pakistan, most of them from Punjab.

Tarar slammed the imprisoned women from the PTI for complaining about the substandard food served to them in jails.

"We can't provide them tasty food in jail. These women were on the forefront in attacking the state installations," he said.

Tarar also said there will be no talks with the PTI till all culprits of the May 9 violence are punished.

A joint investigation team has been formed to find out the mastermind of these attacks, he said, adding that it has been established that Khan was behind the unrest.

Haley's call to align US forces with Russia sparks backlash

AP ■ COLUMBIA

Republican presidential hopeful Nikki Haley suggested in an interview that United States forces "need to align" with non-European countries including Russia to enhance global security, a remark her campaign characterized as a gaffe but which comes amid the Biden administration's approval for millions more in military aid to assist Ukraine in fending off Russia's invasion. Asked by WMUR-TV for a segment Wednesday on regions of the world to which she felt the U.S. could pay more attention, Haley — who served the Trump administration as United Nations ambassador, first said "the Arab world," saying the U.S. needs Arab countries "to kind of join with us" on opposing Iran.

"You see Saudi Arabia making deals with China, that's not good for us. We need them to be with us, and then we need to align with others, Russia, Australia, Japan, Israel," Haley added.

"We need to start focusing on the allies that we have besides the Europeans and make sure that we have more friends — one, for our needs, so that we're not dependent on an enemy for energy or medicines or anything else, and then two, to make sure that we build those alliances so that the world is more safe."

On Saturday, Haley's campaign said the candidate misspoke.

"This is completely ridiculous, she obviously misspoke," spokesman Ken Farnaso told The Associated Press on Saturday. "No one has been tougher on Russia than Nikki Haley."

Asked to comment on the interview, Haley in a statement to AP called the country an "enemy" and referred to President Vladimir Putin as a "thug." "I fought them at the UN and I will continue to fight them," Haley said. "They want to destroy us and our allies and they are not to be trusted." During her tenure as UN ambassador during the Trump administration, Haley was critical of Russia, denouncing its invasion of Crimea, condemning the country for "holding the hands" of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as the countries sparred over sanctions. She also referred to Russian corruption as a "virus" which is "impeding our ability to achieve complete denuclearization in North Korea."

A divide has emerged within the Republican field on how the US should handle Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In response to a query earlier this year from then-Fox News host Tucker Carlson, Haley said US support for Ukraine was critical against an anti-American regime that is "attempting to brutally expand by force into a neighboring pro-American country," saying a Russian victory would only make countries like China and Iran "more aggressive."

At the time, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has since entered the GOP primary race, argued that stopping the aggression wasn't a vital US strategic interest, characterizing the situation as a "territorial dispute."

A number of fellow Republicans were critical of DeSantis' initial remarks. Trump, who had called on European countries to share more of the financial burden of defending Ukraine, said DeSantis' answers were "following what I am saying."



Senegal protests death toll rises

Dakar (AP): The number of people killed in days of clashes between Senegalese police and supporters of opposition leader Ousmane Sonko has now risen to 15, including two security officers, the government said on Saturday.

While Dakar was calmer on Saturday, clashes continued into the evening. In residential neighbourhoods, protesters threw rocks at police, barricaded roads and set tires on fire. The army patrolled the streets as police fired tear gas at the demonstrators, inspecting and detaining people deemed to be causing trouble.

Residents peered over the rooftops of buildings, both shielding for cover and watching the clashes.

The clashes first broke out on Thursday, after Sonko was convicted of corrupting youth but acquitted on charges of raping a woman who worked at a massage parlor and making death threats against her. Sonko, who didn't attend his trial in Dakar, was sentenced to two years in prison. His lawyer said a warrant hadn't yet been issued for his arrest. Sonko

came third in Senegal's 2019 presidential election and is popular with the country's youth. His supporters maintain his legal troubles are part of a government effort to derail his candidacy in the 2024 presidential election.

Sonko is considered President Macky Sall's main competition and has urged Sall to state publicly that he won't seek a third term in office.

The international community has called on Senegal's government to resolve the tensions. France's ministry for Europe and foreign affairs said it was "extremely concerned by the violence" and called for a resolution to this crisis, in keeping with Senegal's long democratic tradition.

Rights groups have condemned the government crackdown, which has included arbitrary arrests and restrictions on social media. Some social media sites used by demonstrators to incite violence, such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter have been suspended, for nearly two days.

N Korean leader's sister vows spy satellite launch

AP ■ SEOUL

The influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed again Sunday to push for a second attempt to launch a spy satellite as she lambasted a UN Security Council meeting over the North's first, failed launch.

The North's attempt to put its first military spy satellite into orbit last Wednesday failed as its rocket crashed off the Korean Peninsula's western coast. An emergency meeting of the UN Security Council was still convened at the request of the US, Japan and other countries are already operating in space. She said her country's attempt to acquire a spy satellite is a legitimate step to respond to military threats posed by the U.S. and its allies.

"(North Korea) will continue to take proactive measures to exercise all the lawful rights of a sovereign state, including the one to a military reconnaissance satellite launch," Kim Yo Jong said in a statement carried by state media.

In her earlier statement Friday, Kim Yo Jong said the



and rude" because it only takes issue with the North's satellite launches while thousands of satellites launched by other countries are already operating in space. She said her country's attempt to acquire a spy satellite is a legitimate step to respond to military threats posed by the U.S. and its allies.

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In her earlier statement Friday, Kim Yo Jong said the

North's spy satellite "will be correctly put on space orbit in the near future" but didn't say when its second launch attempt would take place.

South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers Wednesday it will likely take "more than several weeks" for North Korea to learn the cause of the failed launch but it may attempt a second launch soon if defects aren't serious.

A military surveillance satellite is among a list of sophisticated weapons systems that Kim Jong Un has vowed to acquire amid protracted security tensions with the United States.

Apple set to launch sleek headset

New York (AP): Apple appears poised to unveil a long-rumoured headset that will place its users between the virtual and real world, while also testing the technology trendsetter's ability to popularise new-fangled devices after others failed to capture the public's imagination.

After years of speculation, the stage is set for the widely anticipated announcement to be made on Monday at Apple's annual developers conference in a Cupertino, California, theatre named after the company's late co-founder Steve Jobs.

Apple is also likely to use the event to show off its latest Mac computer, preview the next operating system for the iPhone and discuss its strategy for artificial intelligence.

But the star of the show is expected to be a pair of goggles — perhaps called "Reality Pro", according to media leaks — that could become another milestone in Apple's lore of releasing game-changing technology, even though the company hasn't always been the first to try its hand at making a particular device. Apple's lineage of breakthroughs date back to a bow-tied Jobs peddling the first Mac in 1984 — a tradition that continued with the iPod in 2001, the iPhone in 2007, the iPad in 2010, the Apple Watch in 2014 and its AirPods in 2016.

But with a hefty price tag that could be in the USD 3,000 range, Apple's new headset may also be greeted with a lukewarm reception from all but affluent technophiles.

If the new device turns out to be a niche product, it would leave Apple in the same bind as other major tech companies and startups that have tried selling headsets or glasses equipped with technology that either thrusts people into artificial worlds or projects digital images with scenery and things that are actually in front of them — a format known as "augmented reality".

Nepal's Religious Shift: Hindu majority at 81.19%, rise of Islam, Christianity

Kathmandu (PTI): The population of Hindus and Buddhists in Nepal slightly declined over the past decade while the population of Muslims, Christians, and Kirats marginally increased.

The followers of Hinduism and Buddhism declined by 0.11 per cent and 0.79 per cent respectively over the past 10 years.

Similarly, the population of Islam, Kirat, and Christians increased by 0.69, 0.17 and 0.36 per cent respectively, according to the data.

During the 2011 population census, there were 81.3 per cent Hindus, 9 per cent Buddhists, 4.4 per cent Muslims, 3.1 per cent Kirats, and 0.1 per cent Christians in the Himalayan nation. Christianity, the fifth largest religion in the country, is followed by 5,12,313 people or 1.76 per cent of the total population while the indigenous Kirat religion is the fourth largest religion with 3.17 per cent followers.

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Indian-origin man jailed for defrauding UK property buyers

London (PTI): An Indian-origin man has been sentenced to three years' imprisonment for fraud offences after he admitted to fleeing potential property buyers, many of them also of Indian origin, out of nearly 16,000 pounds, Scotland Yard said.

Jaspal Singh Juttla, 64, was sentenced at Isleworth Crown Court in London on four counts of fraud by false representation and one count of carrying on a regulated activity when not authorised to do so. The offences occurred between May 2019 and January 2021 and Juttla pleaded guilty to the offences at an earlier hearing in August last year at Uxbridge Magistrates' Court, the Metropolitan Police said in a statement.

The offences relate to four victims, where property buyers were conned into handing over approximately 15,790 pounds to Juttla impersonating as a mortgage adviser.

Oil tanker breaks down in Egypt's Suez Canal

AP ■ CAIRO

An oil tanker broke down in a single-lane part of Egypt's Suez Canal on Sunday, briefly disrupting traffic in the global waterway, Egyptian authorities said.

The Malta-flagged Seavigour suffered a mechanical malfunction at the 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) mark of the canal, said George Safwat, a spokesperson for Egypt's Suez Canal Authority. The tanker was transiting the canal from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea.

In a phone interview with a local television station, Adm. Ossama Rabei, head of the Suez Canal Authority, said the tanker broke down in a single-lane part of the waterway, disrupting the transit of eight other vessels behind it.

Hours later, Rabei said in a statement that navigation at the canal had returned to normal



after three tugboats towed the tanker to a double-lane part at the 17 kilometers (10.5 miles) mark. He said that the Seavigour's crew was working on repairing the malfunction but did not share further details.

The Seavigour was built in 2016, and is 274 metres (899 feet) long and 48.63 metres (159 feet) wide, according to MarineTraffic, a vessel tracking service provider.

Sunday's incident was the latest case of a vessel reported stuck in the vital waterway. A

flurry of ships ran aground or broke down in the Suez Canal over the past few years.

On May 25, a Hong Kong-flagged ship briefly blocked the canal. On March 5, a Liberia-flagged ship ran aground in the two-lane part of the waterway. Both vessels were refloated hours later.

In March 2021, the Panama-flagged Ever Given, a colossal container ship, crashed into a bank on a single-lane stretch of the canal, blocking the waterway for six days and disrupting global trade.

Lanka's LGBTQ+ community march for Pride

Colombo (AP): Hundreds of members of Sri Lanka's LGBTQ+ community paraded through the streets of the capital Colombo on Sunday to mark the Pride month and demand an end to discrimination.

The marchers carried rainbow flags and placards calling for a ban of so-called conversion therapies, an end of police harassment of the LGBTQ+ community and equal treatment.

Sri Lanka is a predominantly Buddhist nation holding conservative values and it is rare for people with different sexual orientation to voice their demands in public. Even though there have been similar parades in previous years, last year's anti-government protests amid an unprecedented economic crisis have helped the LGBTQ+ communities to come out stronger, organisers said.

Prince Harry takes on tabloid in court battle

AP ■ LONDON

Prince Harry is going where other British royals haven't for over a century: to a courtroom witness stand. The Duke of Sussex is set to testify in the first of his five pending legal cases largely centred around battles with British tabloids. Opening statements are scheduled Monday in his case.

Harry said in court documents that the royal family had assiduously avoided the courts to prevent testifying about matters that might be embarrassing.

His frustration and anger at the press, however, impelled him to buck convention by suing newspaper owners — allegedly against the wishes of his father, now King Charles III. If Harry testifies as sched-



uled Tuesday in his lawsuit against the publisher of the Daily Mirror, he'll be the first member of the royal family to do so since the late 19th century, when Queen Victoria's eldest son, Prince Albert Edward, testified twice in court. The man who would go

on to become King Edward VII testified in the divorce proceedings of a woman he was accused of having an affair with (he denied it) and in a slander case involving a man who cheated at cards.

Edward VII was the great-grandfather of Queen

Elizabeth II, Harry's grandmother. The Daily Mirror case is one of three Harry has brought alleging phone hacking and other invasions of his privacy, dating back to when he was a boy. In court documents, he described his relationship with the press as "uneasy" in court documents, but it runs much deeper than that. The prince blames paparazzi for causing the car crash that killed his mother, the late Princess Diana.

He also cites harassment and intrusion by the British Press and "vicious, persistent attacks" on his wife, Meghan, including racist articles, as the reason the couple left royal life and fled to the US in 2020. Reforming the news media has become one of his life's missions.

Khamenei justifies hard-line approach towards West

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran's supreme leader on Sunday defended his tough approach to the West, saying compromise would only invite further hostility from Iran's enemies and blaming recent anti-government protests on "thugs and villains". Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's remarks come amid an intensifying standoff with Western countries over Iran's nuclear programme, which has made major advances in the five years since then-President Donald Trump withdrew the US from an international accord that restricted it.

Trump restored crippling sanctions on Iran that have



contributed to a severe economic crisis without forcing any concessions from its leaders. Iran has also lent support to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, supplying armed drones that have wreaked havoc on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv. "Some people are mistak-

en to think if we back down from our stances in certain cases that will cause the enmity of the U.S., the global arrogance, or Israel toward us to diminish," said Khamenei, who has the final say on all major Iranian policies. "This is a mistake." He spoke at an annual speech marking the death of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, his predecessor and the founder of the Islamic Republic.

Khamenei alluded to nationwide protests last fall sparked by the death of a 22-year-old woman, Mahsa Amini, who had been detained by the morality police for allegedly violating the country's strict dress code.

China defends buzzing warship, blames US for provocations

AP ■ SINGAPORE

China's defence minister defended sailing a warship across the path of an American destroyer and Canadian frigate transiting the Taiwan Strait, telling a gathering of some of the world's top defence officials in Singapore on Sunday that such so-called "freedom of navigation" patrols are a provocation to China.

In his first international public address since becoming defence minister in March, Gen. Li Shangfu told the Shangri-La Dialogue that China doesn't have any problems with "innocent passage" but that "we must prevent attempts that try to use those freedom of navigation (patrols), that innocent passage, to exercise hegemony of navigation."

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin told the same forum Saturday that Washington would not "flinch in the face of bullying or coercion" from China and would continue regularly sailing through and flying over the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea to emphasise they are international waters, countering Beijing's sweeping territorial claims.

That same day, as a US guided-missile destroyer and a Canadian frigate were intercepted by a Chinese warship as they transited the strait between the self-governed island of Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, and



Li Shangfu

mainland China.

The Chinese vessel overtook the American ship and then veered across its bow at a distance of 150 yards (about 140 metres) in an "unsafe manner," according to the US Indo-Pacific Command.

Additionally, the US has said a Chinese J-16 fighter jet late last month "performed an unnecessarily aggressive maneuver" while intercepting a US Air Force reconnaissance aircraft over the South China Sea, flying directly in front of the plane's nose.

Those and previous incidents have raised concerns of a possible accident occurring that could lead to an escalation between the two nations at a time when tensions are already high.

Li suggested the US and its allies had created the danger, and should instead should focus on taking "good care of your own territorial airspace

and waters."

"The best way is for the countries, especially the naval vessels and fighter jets of countries, not to do closing actions around other countries' territories," he said through an interpreter. "What's the point of going there? In China we always say, Mind your own business."

In a wide-ranging speech, Li reiterated many of Beijing's well-known positions, including its claim on Taiwan, calling it "the core of our core interests."

He accused the US and others of "meddling in China's internal affairs" by providing Taiwan with defence support and training, and conducting high-level diplomatic visits.

"China stays committed to the path of peaceful development, but we will never hesitate to defend our legitimate rights and interests, let alone sacrifice the nation's core interests," he

said. "As the lyrics of a well-known Chinese song go: When friends visit us, we welcome them with fine wine. When jackals or wolves come, we will face them with shotguns."

In his speech the previous day, Austin broadly outlined the US vision for a "free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific with-in a world of rules and rights."

In the pursuit of such, Austin said the US was stepping up planning, coordination and training with "friends from the East China Sea to the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean" with shared goals "to deter aggression and to deepen the rules and norms that promote prosperity and prevent conflict."

Li scoffed at the notion, saying "some country takes a selective approach to rules and international laws."

"It likes forcing its own rules on others," he said. "Its so-called rules-based international order" never tells you what the rules are and who made these rules."

By contrast, he said, "we practice multilateralism and pursue win-win cooperation."

Li is under American sanctions that are part of a broad package of measures against Russia — but predate its invasion of Ukraine — that were imposed in 2018 over Li's involvement in China's purchase of combat aircraft and anti-aircraft missiles from Moscow.

China tightens access to Tiananmen Sq

Beijing (AP): China tightened already strict access to Tiananmen Square in central Beijing on Sunday, the anniversary of 1989 pro-democracy protests.

In Hong Kong, which had been the last Chinese-controlled territory to hold commemorations, police detained at least two protesters on the eve of the anniversary at Victoria Park.

The large public space had been the scene for an annual candlelight gathering to remember the hundreds or thousands killed when army tanks and infantry descended on central Beijing on the night of June 3 and into the morning of June 4, 1989. Discussion of the events has long been suppressed in China and become increasingly off-limits in Hong Kong since a sweeping national security law was imposed in June 2020, effectively barring anyone from holding memorial events.

The death toll from the 1989 violence remains unknown and the Communist Party relentlessly harasses those at home or overseas who seek to keep the memory of the events alive.

In Beijing, additional security was seen around Tiananmen Square, which has long been ringed with security checks requiring those entering to show identification.

Those passing by foot or on bicycle on Changan Avenue running north of the square were also stopped and forced to show identification.

Those with journalist visas in their passports were told they needed special permission to even approach the area.

Russian 'victory' in Bakhmut: Ukraine keeps up pressure

AP ■ OUTSIDE BAKHMUT (UKRAINE)

Watching imagery from a drone camera overhead, Ukrainian battalion commander Oleg Shiryayev warned his men in nearby trenches that Russian forces were advancing across a field toward a patch of trees outside the city of Bakhmut.

The leader of the 228th Battalion of the 127th Kharkiv Territorial Defence Brigade then ordered a mortar team to get ready. A target was locked. A mortar tube popped out a loud orange blast, and an explosion cut a new crater in an already pockmarked hillside.

"We are moving forward," Shiryayev said after at least one drone image showed a Russian fighter struck down. "We fight for every tree, every trench, every dugout."

Russian forces declared victory in the eastern city last month after the longest, deadliest battle since their full-scale invasion of Ukraine began 15 months ago.

But Ukrainian defenders like Shiryayev aren't retreating. Instead, they are keeping up the pressure and continuing the fight from positions on the western fringes of Bakhmut.



A Ukrainian soldier covers his ears while firing a mortar at Russian positions on the frontline near Bakhmut, Donetsk region, Ukraine, Monday, May 29, 2023. File photo

The pushback gives commanders in Moscow another thing to think about ahead of a much-anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive that appears to be taking shape.

Ukrainian Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar said Russia sought to create the impression of calm around Bakhmut, but in fact, artillery shelling still goes on at levels similar to those at the height of the battle to take the city. The fight, she said, is evolving into a new phase.

"The battle for the Bakhmut area hasn't stopped; it is ongoing, just taking different forms," said Maliar, dressed in her characteristic fatigues in an interview from a military

media centre in Kyiv.

Russian forces are now trying — but failing — to oust Ukrainian fighters from the "dominant heights" overlooking Bakhmut. "We are holding them very firmly," she said.

From the Kremlin's perspective, the area around Bakhmut is just part of the more than 1,000-kilometre (621-mile) front line that the Russian military must hold.

That task could be made more difficult by the withdrawal of the mercenaries from private military contractor Wagner Group who helped take control of the city. They will be replaced with Russian soldiers.

At least 500 kids killed by war: Zelenskyy

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Sunday that Russia's war, now in its 16th month, has killed at least 500 Ukrainian children. Zelenskyy provided the number hours after rescue workers found the body of a 2-year-old girl who died in one of the latest Russian strikes.

The president said in a statement that "Russian weapons and hatred, which continue to take and destroy the lives of Ukrainian children every day," killed the hundreds who had perished since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine started on February 24, 2022.

"Many of them could have become famous scholars, artists, sports champions, contributing to Ukraine's history," he said.

Zelenskyy said it was impossible to establish the exact number of children who were casualties due to the ongoing hostilities and because some areas are under Russian occupation.

"We must hold out and win this war!" the Ukrainian president said. "All of Ukraine, all our people, all our children,

must be free from the Russian terror!" Rescuers found the 2-year-old's body early Sunday while combing through the rubble of an apartment building in the suburbs of the central city of Dnipro.

The regional governor, Serhiy Lysak, said five children were among 22 people injured by Saturday's attack, which damaged two residential buildings. The Russians launched more strikes with drones and cruise missiles on Sunday, targeting multiple areas of the country, including the capital, Kyiv.

The Ukrainian air force said the country's air defences downed three of the five Shahed self-exploding drones and four of the six cruise missiles fired.

Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said two missiles struck a military air base in Kropyvnytskyi, a city in central Ukraine's Kyrovohrad province. He did not report what damage they caused.

The Russian military said it has conducted a series of strikes in recent days on Ukrainian air defence batteries, air bases and troops depots.

Russia's most famous icon handed over to church

Moscow (AP): Russian Orthodox believers celebrated Trinity on Sunday with Russia's most famous icon transferred from a museum to Moscow's main cathedral despite the keepers' vociferous protests.

The Trinity icon by Andrei Rublev, which was kept in Moscow's Tretyakov Gallery since the 1920s, was moved to Christ the Savior Cathedral before the holiday on President Vladimir Putin's personal order.

Putin's abrupt decision to hand over the 15th-century icon to the church came despite a strong opposition from the Tretyakov keepers, who warned that the icon was too fragile to move and requires constant care to avoid a drastic deterioration in its condition. Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill responded by dismissing a senior priest who sided with the museum keepers in advising to keep the icon at the Tretyakov Gallery.

Kirill led a liturgy in the cathedral on Sunday, which was attended by hundreds of believers, including some officials.

US, Saudi push Sudan's warring parties for truce

AP ■ CAIRO

Saudi Arabia and the United States urged Sudan's warring parties on Sunday to agree to and "effectively implement" a new cease-fire as fighting showed no signs of abating in the northeastern African nation. Sudan descended into chaos after fighting broke out in mid-April between the military, led by Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, commanded by Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo.

For weeks, Saudi Arabia and the United States have been mediating between the warring parties. On May 21, both countries successfully brokered a temporary cease-fire agreement to help with the delivery of much-needed humanitarian aid to the war-torn country.

Their efforts, however, were dealt a blow when the military announced on Wednesday it would no longer participate in the cease-fire talks held in the Saudi coastal city of Jeddah.

Following the military's decision, the US and Saudi Arabia said they were suspending the talks "as a result of repeated serious violations of the short-term cease-fire."

President Joe Biden's administration imposed sanctions against key Sudanese defense companies run by the military and the RSF and people who "perpetuate violence" in Sudan.

In their statement on Sunday, Washington and Riyadh said they continued to engage representatives of the military and the RSF who remained in Jeddah. They urged the Sudanese warring sides to agree to and implement a new cease-fire following the latest one which expired late Saturday. The aim is to eventually establish a permanent cessation of hostilities in the war-wrecked country, they said.

The statement said the discussions focused on "facilitating humanitarian assistance" and reaching an agreement on "near-term steps the parties must take" before resuming the talks. The fighting has turned the capital, Khartoum, and other urban areas into battlefields, resulting in widespread looting and destruction of residential areas across the country. The conflict has also displaced more than 1.65 million people who fled to safer areas in Sudan and neighbouring countries.

Aid groups' offices and warehouses, health care facilities and other civilian infrastructure have been attacked and looted, including most recently the warehouses of the World Food Programme in the city of Obeid in North Kordofan on January 1. There have been reports of sexual violence, including the rape of women and girls in Khartoum and the western Darfur region, which have seen some of the worst fighting in the conflict.

Prez Biden's 2024 pitch highlights pragmatism over Trump's pugilism

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden promised voters in 2020 that he knew how to get things done in Washington and could bring stability to the capital. It seemed like a message out of step with the more combative era brought on by Donald Trump.

But Biden prevailed, and as he seeks a second term, he is again trying to frame the race as a referendum on competence and governance, pointing to the bipartisan debt limit and budget legislation he signed on Saturday as another exemplar of the success of his approach.

The agreement the Democratic president negotiated with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and other Republicans averted the catastrophe of a US government default — and forestalled another threat until after the 2024 election — while largely protect-

ing the domestic agenda that formed the backbone of what he hopes will form his legacy.

His approach, favouring pragmatism over Trumpian pugilism, will be tested as never before in the coming campaign, with his approval rating even among Democrats low despite the results he has delivered, in large part because of concerns about his age as the oldest person to ever seek the presidency.

"The results speak for themselves," said Jeff Zients, the 80-year-old Biden's chief of staff. "This level of support shows that we got a bipartisan deal that, most importantly, protects the president's priorities." Biden's allies say his strategy reflects his broader view of the presidency: tuning out the daily chatter and focusing on making a prolonged impact.

"This was quintessential Joe Biden," said longtime Biden confidant and former Delaware Sen. Ted Kaufman. "He really understands the institutions, how they function, how they interact, and what their limitations are. It's the incredible advantage he has from having 36 years in the Senate and eight years as vice president."

That perceived advantage — longevity — is also perhaps Biden's steepest hill as he seeks four more years. Biden, aides said, devised a strategy shortly after Republicans took the House in November and stuck by it through the talks, despite second-guessing from members of his own party. He pressed the Republicans to define their budget priorities, then hammered them in public for unpopular proposed cuts once they did, to enter the negotiations with the strongest hand possible.

Election in Mexico's most populous state a preview of national contest

Mexico City (AP): Mexicans in two states, including the country's most populous, will elect new governors Sunday, having only known single-party rule for nearly a century.

The State of Mexico hugs Mexico City on three sides, encompassing urban sprawl and rural ranches, as well as stunning inequality, violence and corruption. For decades it has been the heart of the Institutional Revolutionary Party. But its vot-

ers could be ready to finally oust the PRI in favor of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's Morena party, in a race closely watched as a preview of the 2024 presidential election.

Morena candidate Delfina Gómez, a schoolteacher making her second bid for the post, has held a healthy lead in recent polling over Alejandra del Moral. The former mayor representing the PRI has struggled to attract a fed-up electorate

bent on change. Del Moral is not only the PRI's hope. She leads a bizarre coalition including the conservative National Action Party and leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution that have only in common the desire to deny López Obrador's party control of Mexico's largest state electoral prize. Gómez has campaigned largely on the far-reaching support for López Obrador's popular social programmes.

3 Chinese astronauts return home from space station

PTI ■ BEIJING/JIUQUAN

Three Chinese astronauts on Sunday returned safely to Earth on board the Shenzhou-15 manned spaceship after completing their six-month mission to build China's space station.

Shenzhou-15's return capsule carrying astronauts Fei Junlong, Deng Qingming and Zhang Lu, touched down at the Dongfeng landing site in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region at 6:33 am (Beijing Time), China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) said here.

The three completed their six-month space station mission, it announced.

The astronauts were in good shape, and the Shenzhou-15 manned mission was a success, the agency announced.

The three were replaced by three other astronauts, including China's first civilian who successfully flew to the space

station on May 30.

The new set of astronauts will stay in the space station for five months.

Once ready, China will be the only country to own a space station as the International Space Station (ISS) of Russia is a collaborative project of several countries. The ISS station is also set to be decommissioned by 2030. The significant feature of China's space station is its two robotic arms, especially the long one which can grab objects, including satellites from space.

The three astronauts later arrived in Beijing by plane after their safe return to earth.

The crew will enter a period of medical quarantine and undergo comprehensive medical examinations and health evaluations, the CMSA said.

"We have completed all the scheduled tasks and felt good after returning to the motherland," Fei, the mission com-



mander, said. Fei had also participated in the country's second crewed space mission, Shenzhou-6, in October 2005.

Deng, who finally got the chance to fly to space after 25 years of preparation, said: "I always believe in the power of dreams and persistence. No matter how old I am, I feel so happy to be needed by the nation."

"I'm now very excited, and

when I was on the space station, I often watched through the window, trying to find my motherland and hometown," Xinhua news agency quoted Zhang, one of China's second batch of astronauts, as saying.

"We will adjust our bodies as soon as possible, go back into training, and be ready for space missions in the future," Zhang added.

During their stay in the space station, the crew success-

fully obtained three-dimensional structural images of their skin cells with the country's self-developed two-photon microscope, Xinhua reported. This achievement, the first of its kind worldwide, marked the success of the in-orbit verification experiments of the two-photon microscope, providing a promising tool for future health monitoring of astronauts in orbit.

They also successfully performed the first in-orbit ignition test in the Mengtian space lab module's combustion cabinet during the Shenzhou-15 mission.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the operation of the country's Stirling thermoelectric converter realized its in-orbit verification. The heat-to-electricity converter showed an internationally advanced conversion efficiency during its smooth operation, the CMSA said.

Mariupol documentary screened for 1st time in Ukraine

Kyiv (AP): The award-winning film "20 Days in Mariupol" made its premiere in Ukraine on Saturday, when it was seen for the first time by some of the Ukrainian medics and first responders who were chronicled in the documentary about how Russian forces bombed and blasted their way into the port city last year. Repeated standing ovations in a packed Kyiv cinema, mixed with tears and hugs, greeted the civil servants who toiled nearly non-stop in and around a Mariupol hospital that was a centerpiece of the film that documented the early days of the fight for the city, which eventually fell to Russian hands.

For some, the screening served as an unsettling flashback to their own brushes with death, a fate inescapable for untold numbers of victims of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, including toddlers, infants and expectant mothers whose final moments are shown in the film.

"It was very hard emotionally because it reminded me of when we were leaving Mariupol, there were still a lot of casualties," said Serhiy Chornobrivets, 25, an ambulance worker who treated countless patients in the city, and is now a military medic. "I could have saved more people,

but I didn't." "Watching that movie brought all those feelings back," he added. Many viewers of the documentary, a joint project between The Associated Press and PBS Frontline, expressed their gratitude that the footage eventually got out to the world for history's sake. The documentary by Associated Press journalist Mstyslav Chernov was built on some 30 hours of film from reporting along with AP photographer Evgeniy Maloletka and AP producer Vasilisa Stepanenko about the earliest phase of the Russian invasion of Mariupol.

Before The Honble District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum At Tirupur
C.M.A.No. 30 of 2023
IN
C.C.No. 256 of 2022
Mr. Kirubhakaran
1/94, Pampord, Anupatti,
Palladam 641 664, Tamil Nadu
Petitioner/complainant
Vs.
1. SHOPCLUES (oprime shopclues.com).
M/s Clues Network Pvt Ltd -
SHOPCLUES 1404-07, 14th Floor
Tower-B Unitech Cyber Park Sector 39
Gurugram Haryana - 122003.
2. SHOPCLUES BAZAAR
(shopclues.com), M/s Clues Network Pvt
Ltd - SHOPCLUES 1404-07, 14th Floor
Tower-B Unitech Cyber Park Sector 39
Gurugram Haryana - 122003.
Respondent/opposite Parties
NOTICE TO OPPOSITE PARTIES
The Complainant Mr.Kirubhakaran has filed an
Application before, The Hon'ble District
Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, at
Tirupur, against you and another for amendment
of Complaint. The same is posted on 12/6/2023
before the forum situated at No.28,
Sengunthapuram, 1st Street, Mangalam Road,
Karuvampalayam, Tiruppur 641604. You are
herby called upon to appear either in person or
through an advocate 12/6/2023 at 10.30 AM
before the Honourable Judge in the forum,
without fail. Failing which the matter will be
decided in your
absence. Notice as per Commission order in CMA
73 of 2023 dated 30/5/2023.
Mr.Kirubhakaran BA 8L
Advocate
1/94 Pampord Anupatti
Palladam 641664 Tamil Nadu
Cell 8903482445

M/s SHUBH ADVISORS PVT. LTD.
want to withdraw T-2, T-3, T-4, T-5 and
villas of the Project NCR AURIEL TOWNE
from UPRERA bearing registration number
UPRERAPRJ6660. If any individual/
company has any bookings in these
towers kindly share/present their claim
on email id contactuprera@up-rera.in
and to the Secretary, UPRERA Rajya
Niyojan Sansthan, Naveen Bhavan,
Kalakankar House Road, Old Hyderabad,
Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh 226007 within
15 days of date of publish of this notice.
M/S SHUBH ADVISORS PVT.LTD.
EMAIL ID :- info@ncrgroup.in

'RBI likely to maintain pause on interest rate'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will maintain the policy repo rate at 6.5 per cent during its upcoming June 8 announcement, considering the easing of retail inflation in April and the potential for further decline, indicating the effectiveness of previous policy rate actions, anticipate experts.

Headed by Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das, a meeting of the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is scheduled for June 6-8. The decision of the 43rd meeting of the MPC would be announced on Thursday, June 8.

After the last MPC meeting in April, the RBI paused its rate hike cycle and stayed with the 6.5 per cent repo rate. Prior to that the Central bank had cumulatively hiked the repo rate by 250 basis points since May 2022 in a bid to contain inflation.

The MPC is meeting in the backdrop of consumer price-based (CPI) inflation declining



to an 18-month low of 4.7 per cent in April. The Reserve Bank governor recently indicated that the May print would be lower than the April numbers. The CPI for May is scheduled to be announced on June 12.

Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda, said the RBI is most likely to continue to pause on the interest rates and retain repo rate at 6.5 per cent.

"The reason is that inflation has come in lower than 5 per cent in April and will be even lower in May. This being the case, the view would be that

past repo rate actions have had an effect on inflation and hence there can be another pause taken," he said.

The policy stance, he added, will however remain with withdrawal of accommodation since there has already been an increase in liquidity as deposits increase due to the announcement of the exchange of the Rs 2,000 notes.

The RBI will also be monitoring the progress of the monsoon and the possible ill effects of El Nino which can affect the kharif harvest and hence impact prices, experts said.

"For the year, however, we see 25-50 bps cut in repo rate which will be post October only," Sabnavis said.

The government has mandated the RBI to ensure CPI inflation at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

Bankers too expect that the central bank will continue its pause in the forthcoming policy.

"As far as bankers are concerned I would only say that

RBI's repo rate has already been increased 2.5 per cent. Expectations from the market or the banking side is that we do not expect that any rise in the repo rate would be there because already the interest rate has been raised by 2.5 per cent on the repo side and inflation is moderate," Rajneesh Karnatak, Managing Director, Bank of India, told PTI.

He said the inflation is also moderate. "If you see the data of wholesale inflation and retail inflation, it is now moderate. I think there will be a pause from RBI and there will not be any increase in the repo rate," Karnatak said.

Echoing his views, Bank of Maharashtra executive director Asheesh Pandey said RBI would continue its stance of wait and watch before tinkering with rate.

Keeping inflation, liquidity in the banking system and recent GDP number into consideration, it seems that RBI is likely to maintain pause as far as interest rate is concerned, Pandey added.

NSE, BSE to introduce enhanced surveillance mechanism for micro-small companies

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To curb volatility in small-cap counters, leading stock exchanges BSE and NSE have put in place an enhanced surveillance mechanism for companies that have a market cap of less than Rs 500 crore.

The Enhanced Surveillance Measure (ESM) will be effective from June 5.

Sebi and exchanges in a joint meeting have decided to introduce ESM framework for "micro-small" companies (on the main board with market cap less than Rs 500 crore), the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and BSE said in two separate circulars on Friday.

The parameters for short-listing the securities under the ESM framework include high-low price variation and close-to-close price variation. Under the framework, the exchanges said, "... The trading for these securities will be settled through a trade for trade mechanism with a price band of 5 per cent or 2 per cent (if the scrip is already in the 2 per cent band)."

"For securities in Stage II, the trading will be settled

through a trade for trade mechanism with a price band of 2 per cent.

"The trading for these securities will be permitted once a week with periodic call auctions."

Further, the securities of public sector enterprises, public sector banks and the securities on which derivative products are available will be excluded from the process of shortlisting under the ESM framework.

The security shall be part of the framework for a minimum period of three months. However, in case a security is under Stage II of the framework, it shall be retained under Stage 2 for a minimum period of one month. After the completion of one month, in a weekly stage review if such a security's close to close price variation is less than 8 per cent in a month, it can move to Stage I of the ESM framework, the bourses said.

Securities that complete three months in the framework shall be eligible for stage-wise exit if they no longer meet the entry criteria, they added.



FPIs investment hit 9-month high at ₹43,838 cr in May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) pumped in Rs 43,838 crore in Indian equities in May, the highest level in nine months, supported by strong macroeconomic fundamentals, and reasonable valuations.

FPIs continued the buying stance in June too, and invested Rs 6,490 crore in just two trading sessions of the month, data with the repositories showed. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said that inflow by FPIs will continue in the current month since the latest GDP data and high-frequency indicators reflect a robust economy gaining further strength.

According to the data, FPIs invested a net sum of Rs 43,838 crore in the Indian equities in the entire month of May.

This is the highest level of investment by FPIs in the last nine months. Before this, they put in a net sum of Rs 51,204 crore in equities in August 2022, data showed. This came following a net infusion of Rs 11,630 crore in equities in April and Rs 7,936 crore in March.

The March investment was

mainly driven by bulk investment in the Adani Group companies by US-based QG Partners. However, if one adjusts for the investments of QG in Adani Group, the net flow was negative.

Moreover, in the first two months of the year, FPIs had pulled out over Rs 34,000 crore.

Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research at Morningstar India, said the latest net inflows are largely driven by the strong domestic macro-outlook, reasonable valuation of the Indian equities, and a good earning season signifying better growth prospects. The sustained buying by FPIs has lifted the NSE benchmark index, Nifty, during the period under review.

Interestingly, India attracted the largest investment among all emerging markets, and FPIs were sellers in China.

In terms of sectors, financials, automobiles, telecom, and construction are attracting big investments. Apart from equities, FPIs invested Rs 3,276 crore in the debt market in May. So far in 2023, foreign investors have put in Rs 35,748 crore in the Indian equities and Rs 7,471 crore in the debt market.



Transfer of Sahara Life business unlikely to impact SBI Life's balance sheet

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Transfer of liabilities of around two lakh policies along with assets of Sahara Life is unlikely to have a major impact on SBI Life Insurance as the business of the former is very small, an expert said. The total number of policies being transferred is only a small percentage of SBI Life's total policies, a company official said. At the same time, capital related to policies based on actuarial calculation is being transferred to SBI Life, an insurance industry expert said.

Besides, the expert said that the new policyholders may provide an opportunity for SBI Life to offer their product depending on their age profile.

There may not be a big impact on SBI Life, the expert said, adding, it is also a test case for the industry since it was opened for private players in 2000.

On Friday, regulator Irdai directed SBI Life Insurance to takeover the policy liabilities of around two lakh policies along with assets of stressed Sahara India Life Insurance Co Ltd (SILIC).

The decision was taken at the meeting of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) in view of deteriorating financial health of the SILIC.

Sahara Life Insurance was also not allowed to underwrite new business since 2021. Thereafter, further directions were issued to the insurer to meet the regulatory requirements.

"Despite being provided ample opportunities and sufficient time to ensure compliance, SILIC has failed to comply with directions of the authority and take any affirmative steps to protect the interests of its policyholders," the regulator had said.

Further, the policy data of SILIC reveals that the company's portfolio is showing a run-off trend. The financial position has been deteriorating with rising losses and higher percentage of claims to total premium.

"If the trend is allowed to continue, the situation will worsen and lead to erosion of capital and SILIC may not be able to discharge its liabilities towards policyholders, thereby endangering the interest of its policyholders," Irdai had said.

Mcap of 7 of top-10 most-valued firms erodes by ₹65,656 cr; Reliance biggest laggard

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of seven of the top-10 most-valued firms eroded by Rs 65,656 crore last week, with Reliance Industries taking the biggest hit, amid a muted trend in domestic equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark gained 45.42 points or 0.07 per cent, and the Nifty climbed 34.75 points or 0.18 per cent.

While Reliance Industries,

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, ITC, Infosys and HDFC were the laggards, Hindustan Unilever, State Bank of India and Bharti Airtel witnessed addition in their market valuations.

The market valuation of Reliance Industries eroded by Rs 34,910.54 crore to Rs 16,60,923.11 crore. ICICI Bank's valuation tumbled Rs 9,355.65 crore to Rs 6,55,197.93 crore and that of Infosys fell by Rs 7,739.51

crore to Rs 5,38,923.48 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of TCS declined by Rs 7,684.01 crore to Rs 12,10,414.19 crore and that of HDFC Bank dived Rs 5,020.13 crore to Rs 8,97,722.23 crore.

ITC's valuation dipped Rs 621.4 crore to reach Rs 5,50,809.75 crore and that of HDFC went lower by Rs 325.12 crore to Rs 4,88,141.04 crore.

However, Hindustan Unilever added Rs 15,213.6 crore

taking its valuation to Rs 6,38,231.22 crore.

Bharti Airtel's mcap jumped Rs 10,231.92 crore to Rs 4,66,263.37 crore and that of State Bank of India climbed Rs 1,204.82 crore to Rs 5,24,053.21 crore. In the ranking of top-10 firms, Reliance Industries retained the number one rank, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, ITC, Infosys, State Bank of India, HDFC and Bharti Airtel.

Mother Dairy to invest ₹400 cr to set up unit in Nagpur: Gadkari

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Sunday said Mother Dairy will invest Rs 400 crore in Nagpur in a project for which the government will give 10 hectares of land.

Speaking to reporters to highlight achievements in nine years of the Narendra Modi government, the senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader and Nagpur Lok Sabha MP said, dairy products from the proposed unit will be supplied across the country.

"The company is going to procure 30 lakh litres of milk daily from farmers. It will benefit farmers of Nagpur and other districts of Vidarbha," he said. Mother Dairy is a wholly owned subsidiary of National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and was commissioned in 1974 as part of Operation Flood.

Minus Zero unveils autonomous vehicle based on camera-sensor suite

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Marque angel investors-backed self-driving startup Minus Zero on Sunday unveiled an autonomous vehicle based on a camera-sensor suite. With the ability to scale up to Level 5 autonomy capabilities, the vehicle named zPod, can drive itself in all environmental and geographical constraints, company's co-founder Gagandeep Reehal announced.

Co-founded in 2021 by Reehal and Gursimran Kalra, the Bangalore-based tech platform plans to produce fully-autonomous vehicles on the lines of the ones by global tech giants such as Tesla and Google. The startup also plans to leverage AI to resolve issues confronted by tech firms trying to produce autonomous vehicles suitable to the Indian roads. The platform also floated a whitepaper on "Nature-Inspired AI" (NIA), claiming it as a novel approach to building general-

ized autonomous agents inspired by physics-aware vision and the predictive decision-making capabilities of a human brain, making it efficient in handling real-world road scenarios.

Using NIA, Minus Zero introduced the concept of "True Vision Autonomy" (TVA), which they believe is the safest and most scalable approach to autonomous driving, and can scale up to Level 5 autonomy, it said. TVA is vehicle agnostic and relies only on cameras as its sensor suite.

The company also plans expanding its autonomous vehicle trials in foreign markets with stable regulatory norms over the next two years, including public road trials.

"With true vision autonomy coming to the fore, one can make autonomous vehicles a reality, solving major pain points of the mobility paradigm," said Reehal, who is also the Chief Executive Officer of Minus Zero.

Deloitte flags sourcing from inappropriately approved vendors at BharatPe

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Auditor Deloitte has flagged inappropriately approved vendors and excess payments at BharatPe, where its former MD and co-founder Ashneer Grover has been accused of cheating and embezzlement of funds.

In its latest annual report, BharatPe presented opinion of its statutory auditor that said the company's internal control system for vendor selection as well as for approval of invoices for purchase of goods and services were not operating effectively, resulting in procurements at inappropriately approved prices.

After devoting a page on the statutory auditors' report, BharatPe's annual report in the following section stated that "there were no instances of fraud reported by auditors to the board of directors".

This was used by Grover to attack reportage, saying no journalist has read the annual report of BharatPe which has clearly writes of no fraud.



"Ek bhi journalist ne @bharatpeindia ki annual FY22 report nahi padhi - auditor ne clearly likha hua hai 'NO instances of FRAUD reported by Auditors to the Board of Directors'. @Deloitte is the auditor who were paid Rs 4 crore audit fees (up from Rs 40 lakh I paid them as MD) and clearly found NOTHING," Grover wrote on Twitter.

But when the preceding page of the annual report was pointed out to him, he launched personal attack, adding the role of auditor should be googled.

"Doosri baat - Jin forensic audit ki aap baat kar rahe ho

@alvarezmarsal and @PwC - unpe @bharatpeindia ne Rs 9 crore kharche ke baad unki report ko junk kar diya - woh usko na to Court mein pesh kar rahe hai na Police ko - to sawaal aapko apne Maliko se poochna chahiye mujh se na hi." (The report of forensic audit [into allegations against Grover and his family] by Alvarez and Marsal and PwC, on whom Rs 9 crore was spent by BharatPe, was junked and was neither presented to court or police. And question on it should be asked to them and not to him).

He then went on to cite 'innocent till proven guilty' law but did not reply to concerns Deloitte flagged in the report.

BharatPe in police and court complaints has alleged that Grover, his wife Madhuri Jain and other family members created fake bills, enlisted fictitious vendors to provide services to the company, and overcharged the firm for recruitment. It is seeking up to Rs 88.67 crore in damages.

Private sector investment set to witness significant increase: Dinesh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Private sector investment is set to witness a significant increase, as capacity utilisation in several key sectors has already crossed 80 per cent and economic growth is estimated to be 6.7 per cent in the current financial year, newly elected CII President R Dinesh said on Sunday.

He also exuded confidence that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will maintain status quo on interest rate in the next bi-monthly monetary policy to be announced later this week.

On why the government unsuccessfully keeps on nudging private companies to increase investment, the CII president told PTI that the period between 2016 to 2019, was not good for growth and in 2020 there was COVID.

"We have circumstances beyond our control which hampered demand... We did come out of the COVID much faster," he said, adding there are signs of improvement.

Citing the CII's annual CEOs survey, he said all sectors have crossed 75 per cent capacity utilisation and the figure was 80 per cent in key sec-

tors like cement, steel, chemicals and machinery.

"We are at the cusp of where private sector capex will see a significant increase happening," he said, adding that as per the CMIE data investment commitment of Rs 25.7 lakh crore was made last year, as compared to Rs 14.3 lakh crore a year ago.

Last year in September, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman sought to know from the industry what is holding it back from investing in manufacturing, even though foreign investors show confidence in India.

Investors still warming up to ESG-focussed funds; asset base drops by ₹2,020 cr in FY23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sustainable or ESG (environmental, social, and governance) focused mutual funds, which are in a nascent stage in India, have seen their asset base declining by Rs 2,020 crore in fiscal 2022-23 even as experts hope such funds will attract greater attention in coming years.

ESG investing is gaining traction globally, and India is also witnessing an increased awareness and interest in sustainable and responsible investment practices. At present, there are 12 mutual fund schemes in India having ESG



as their theme.

"With growing concerns about environmental and social issues, coupled with regulatory initiatives to promote ESG investing, the demand for ESG funds is expected to rise in the future. As more investors recognize

the potential for both financial returns and positive impact, ESG funds are likely to attract greater attention and witness further growth," Gopal Kavalireddi, Research Head of FYERS, said.

Kaustubh Belapurkar, Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India, also believes that investors' interest in ESG funds will increase on growing awareness towards such funds in coming years. However, flow is expected to remain muted for sustainable funds in the current financial year given that ESG investing is still in its nascent stage, he added.

NCLT approves 180 resolution plans involving realisation amount of ₹51,424 cr in FY23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Insolvency tribunal NCLT approved 180 resolution plans in FY23, the highest-ever number so far, resulting in a total realisation of Rs 51,424 crore from stressed assets.

While, in terms of realisation of the amount for creditors, this is the second highest after FY19, when the total realisation was Rs 1.11 lakh crore after completing 77 insolvency proceedings including some big-ticket matters such as Essar Steel and Monnet Ispat.

This has helped creditors of debt-ridden firms in FY23 to realise 36 per cent of their total admitted claims of Rs 1,42,543 crore for the year ended March 31, 2023.

The combined total liquidation value of the assets of 180 corporate debtors (CD) was at Rs 39,110.10 crore and the creditors received 131 per cent higher than it, according to data released by the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI). Moreover in FY23, the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) admitted



1,255 applications from creditors for initiation of the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP), which is also one of the highest number since 2019.

The NCLT approved 147 resolution plans in FY22, 121 in FY21 and 134 in FY20, in which the creditors had realised 23 per cent, 17 per cent and 26 per cent of their admitted claims, respectively. As per the data, the NCLT has cleared a total of 678 resolution plans till the end of FY23 and "the creditors have realised Rs 2.86 lakh crore".

"The fair value of the assets available with these CDs, when they entered the CIRP was estimated at Rs 2.65 lakh crore and liquidation value of Rs 1.70 lakh crore against the total claims of the creditors worth Rs 8.99 lakh crore," the IBBI's latest newsletter said.

BUSINESS BRIEF

UNIVERSITY DAY CELEBRATIONS AT VIT-AP UNIVERSITY
VIT-AP University celebrated its University day on Saturday, 3rd June, 2023. It was a memorable event that glorified the achievements of the University and its students. The day was also a reminder of the University's commitment to excellence in education and research. It was a day of celebration, a day of learning, and a day of hope as VIT-AP stands as synonym to quality education and innovative ideas to equip future generations with sufficient knowledge and skills to compete globally. The University is confident that the future is bright for its students and for the institution as a whole

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Motors expects the passenger vehicle industry growth to moderate to 5-7 per cent in the current financial year as compared with 27 per cent sales growth in the last financial year with dip in pent-up demand, according to a top company executive.

In order to sustain growth, the auto major is looking to

Expect PV segment growth to moderate to 5-7% this fiscal: Tata Motors

introduce new products including CNG and electric models, while bolstering its existing range with new interventions.

In an analyst call, Tata Motors Managing Director, Passenger Vehicle and Electric Vehicles, Shailesh Chandra noted

that pent-up demand in the passenger vehicle segment has now clearly gone down, barring certain new launches in a few popular sports utility vehicle segments.

He noted that due to pent-up demand and low inventory

levels last fiscal, the industry reported a steep growth of 27 per cent year on year as compared with FY22.

"This year (2023-24)...Growth would be slightly moderate in the zone of 5 to 7 per cent."

India begin practice for WTC final

IAN S ■ LONDON

Head of the World Test Championship final against Australia, the Indian Test team on Sunday commenced their practice session at The Oval. India will play Australia at The Oval in the much-awaited WTC final from June 7 to 11.

The BCCI shared the picture of the side hitting the ground running at the iconic venue. "Hello from the Oval," it said in a tweet.

On May 25, the BCCI had said via its official Twitter handle that Indian team members like Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Shardul Thakur along with head coach Rahul Dravid and other support staff members had begun practicing at the picturesque Arundel Castle Cricket Club in Arundel town.

On May 29, it shared pictures of talismanic batter Virat Kohli, Cheteshwar Pujara, Jaydev Unadkat, Mohammed Siraj and Ravichandran Ashwin engaged in practice and chats with support staff members at Arundel.

Skipper Rohit Sharma, Ishan Kishan and young Mumbai opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, a reserve player, joined the practice session from May 30. On the other hand, Ravindra Jadeja, Shubman Gill, Mohammad Shami, KS Bharat and Ajinkya Rahane linked up with the team on June 1 after featuring in the

IPL final in Ahmedabad, followed by Mohammed Shami joining practice on June 2.

India, then led by Kohli, had finished as runners-up in the inaugural WTC cycle after losing the title clash to Kane Williamson's New Zealand by eight wickets at Rose Bowl in Southampton in 2021.

With Rohit set to captain the Test team on overseas soil for the first time, India will be aiming to go one step further through their second straight WTC final appearance against Australia at The Oval, who will be hosting a Test match in June for the very first time.

The final will mark the end of the second edition of the WTC, which was introduced in 2019 to add context to matches in the longest format of the game. The winners of the WTC Final will take home a purse of 1.6 million dollars while the losers will get 800,000 dollars.

INDIA SQUAD

Rohit Sharma (captain), Ravichandran Ashwin, KS Bharat, Shubman Gill, Ravindra Jadeja, Virat Kohli, Ishan Kishan, Cheteshwar Pujara, Axar Patel, Ajinkya Rahane, Mohammad Shami, Mohammad Siraj, Shardul Thakur, Jaydev Unadkat, Umesh Yadav.

Reserves: Yashasvi Jaiswal, Mukesh Kumar, Suryakumar Yadav



Rahane stands at crossroads in his comeback Test

PTI ■ LONDON

Ajinkya Rahane is set to play his first red-ball game for India in 18 months and potentially faces a do-or-die situation in the World Test Championship final against Australia at The Oval beginning June 7.

Making a quick switch from T20 to the five-day format, Rahane plans to "keep it simple" and will be hoping that the impeccable timing he displayed through the IPL travels with him to London.

The tough call of dropping both Rahane and Cheteshwar Pujara from the Test team after the series loss in South Africa was taken in early 2022 but the latter made his way back into the side after a bumper run in county cricket in the same year.

Rahane, a veteran of 82 Tests, had to wait a year longer for his comeback. He earned his national call up after getting the runs in the Ranji Trophy and more recently following his reinvention in the IPL that left everyone impressed.

In all probability, he might not



have got the recall if Shreyas Iyer was fit but both form and luck played a part in his return. With the much younger Iyer having already proved himself in the middle-order, the clock will be ticking for Rahane when he goes out to bat at The Oval.

His record in the three Tests he has played in the South London has been forgettable but that is unlikely to play on his mind as ability has never been in ques-

tion all through his career, having piled up the hundreds in New Zealand, England and Australia.

As the cricketing world witnessed in 2021 when he led India to one of their greatest triumphs Down Under, Australia as opponents tend to bring the best out of Rahane. He will not have the additional pressure of captaining the side this time, he will just have to let his bat do the talking.

An average of 38.52 in Tests doesn't say much about Rahane's consistency but former chief selector MSK Prasad feels the experienced batter should be persisted with going forward if he does well in the high stakes WTC final.

"First all of Ajinkya has got a fantastic record in away series. He has got runs almost everywhere. He did not do well and lost his place but in the last 18 months he has played lot of domestic cricket and got lot of runs," Prasad, who led the selection committee between 2016-2020, told PTI.

"I do understand that Iyer was doing well but it (his injury) could turn out to a blessing in disguise for India. If he does well, why not continue with him.

Neser replaces Hazlewood in Oz squad

IAN S ■ LONDON

Fast-bowling all-rounder Michael Neser has been named as a replacement for Josh Hazlewood in Australia's squad for the World Test Championship Final clash against India starting at The Oval from June 7.

As per the International Cricket Council (ICC), Hazlewood has been ruled out of the marquee match due to his ongoing left Achilles and left side issue. Neser, who has played two Tests and as many ODIs for Australia, has been brought in for the WTC Final squad after his inclusion was approved by the Event Technical Committee.

Hazlewood had also missed this year's tour of India due to a left Achilles tendon issue, which delayed his arrival in Indian Premier League (IPL) 2023. He then left the tournament after playing only three games for Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) due to a side issue.

Hazlewood had also missed a majority of the last two home summers due to side strains. His absence now means that Neser and specialist pacer Scott Boland are in contention for the third pacer slot and partner with captain Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc. Chief selector George Bailey said Hazlewood should be available for selection for the first Ashes Test against England at Edgbaston, starting from June 16.

"Josh was very, very close to being given the green light but we are cognisant that our upcoming schedule means this is not a one-off Test match of us," Bailey was quoted as say-



ing by cricket.com.au.

Injuries in the last two years have meant Hazlewood has played only four of Australia's last 19 Test matches and has not featured in consecutive first-class games since early 2021. He was picked for the WTC Final squad subject to coming through heavy training loads.

He had said to the ICC on May 31 that he was hopeful of being ready for the clash at The Oval and had even bowled a lot in the training session on Saturday.

On the other hand, Neser has scored 311 runs and taken 19 wickets, with scores of 123, 86 and 90 so far being a standout from his time in the county championship with Glamorgan. Though he was left out of the initial 17-man Australia squad for the WTC Final and Ashes, Neser and Sean Abbott were training with the Test side at Beckenham.

"Michael's County form

has been strong and knowing that he was going to be close by allowed for him to keep playing and for us to be able to call on him. He is a great strength to have as part of the fast bowling group."

"This will give Josh an ideal preparation leading into Edgbaston. With six Test matches in a little over seven weeks we will need all of our fast bowling assets," added Bailey, the former Australia cricketer.

UPDATED AUSTRALIA SQUAD

Pat Cummins (captain), Scott Boland, Alex Carey (wicketkeeper), Cameron Green, Marcus Harris, Travis Head, Josh Inglis (wicketkeeper), Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Todd Murphy, Michael Neser, Steve Smith (vice-captain), Mitchell Starc and David Warner

Standby players: Mitch Marsh, Matthew Renshaw

Stokes tries to allay fitness fears

PTI ■ LONDON

Ben Stokes attempted to calm concerns over his fitness ahead of the Ashes after an England 10-wicket warm-up win over Ireland inside three days at Lord's where he neither batted nor bowled.

Captain of England cricket team, Stokes declared with the hosts on 524-4, meaning he didn't have to bat.

And having struggled with a left knee injury since England's tour of New Zealand in February, the pacer also opted against bowling himself in this lone Test. The all-rounder looked as if he might become the first England captain since Harold Gilligan 93 years ago not to bat, bowl, hold a catch or make a stumping in a Test.

But Stokes avoided joining an exclusive club when he caught Curtis Campher off part-time off-spinner Joe Root during Saturday's morning session.

The way he then hobbled to join his celebrating teammates was a worrying sign, however, with the Ashes opening against Australia at Edgbaston in less than two weeks on June 16.

Nevertheless, the England captain told a post-match news conference on Saturday.

"I bowled this morning (in the nets) for the first time in four weeks and I felt really good. I was real happy with how I bowled," Stokes said in the post match presentation.

SL bounces back to beat Afghan in second ODI



AP ■ HAMBANTOTA

Sri Lanka bounced back to beat Afghanistan by 132 runs on Sunday to square the three-match one-day series.

It was Sri Lanka's biggest win over Afghanistan in ODIs and makes amends for its disappointing performance in the first ODI on Friday, which they lost by six wickets.

Having set Afghanistan a stiff 324-run target, fast bowler Dushmantha Chameera dismissed the dangerous Rahmanullah Gurbaz cheaply for two runs to give his side an early advantage.

Although Afghanistan put together two strong partnerships after that, the required run rate kept climbing and the Afghans lost their way trying to keep pace.

Opening batsman Ibrahim Zadran continued his good form, posting 54 runs while captain Hashmatullah Shahidi top scored with 57 runs, but once

Sri Lanka dismissed the top order there was not much resistance from the rest of the batters.

From 146-2, Afghanistan collapsed to be bowled out for 191 runs in 42.1 overs, losing their last eight wickets for just 45 runs.

Spinners Wanindu Hasaranga and Dhananjaya de Silva shared six wickets between them to seal a comprehensive win for the home side.

Sri Lanka's batting put on a show giving the team confidence ahead of the World Cup qualifiers in Zimbabwe this month.

Afghanistan have already qualified for the World Cup and despite the heavy defeat on Sunday, will feel positive with star Rashid Khan expected to feature in the final game on Wednesday. The leg-spinner was ruled out of the first two with a back injury.

Half-centuries by Kusal Mendis and Dimuth

Litton to captain Bangladesh in upcoming Test against Afghan



Wicketkeeper-batter Litton Das will be captaining Bangladesh in the upcoming one-off Test against Afghanistan starting from June 14 in Dhaka.

Das' elevation to captaincy comes after premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan's finger injury ruled him out of action for at least six weeks during the ODI series against Ireland in Chelmsford last month.

In the 15-member squad led by Das, Bangladesh have included uncapped players, batter Shahadat Hossain Dipu and pacer Musfik

Hasan. Taskin Ahmed and Zakir Hasan make a return to the Test team after recovering from side strain and thumb injury respectively, with no places for Shadman Islam and Rejaur Rahman Raja.

Shahadat, 21, is a right-handed middle-order batter who made his first-class debut in 2021, after being a member of the Bangladesh side winning the 2020 Men's U-19 World Cup in South Africa. He has scored 1265 runs from 20 first-class games with two hundreds and 10 half-centuries.

Mushfik, 20, burst onto the scene after his debut in the 2022/23 first-class season. He has taken 49 wickets from 13 matches with three five-wicket hauls. Both players were part of Bangladesh A side in the just-concluded unofficial Test series against West Indies A, with Shahadat making two half-centuries.

Karunaratne helped Sri Lanka post its commanding total. While Mendis top scored with 78 runs off 75 balls with seven fours and one six, Karunaratne, who was recalled for this series to stabilize the batting, made 52 off 62 balls with seven fours.

Opener Pathum Nissanka contributed 43 runs while Sadeera Samarawickrama, featuring in an ODI for the first

time since 2019, made 44 off 46 balls.

There was some big hitting by the lower middle order with captain Dasun Shanaka chipping in with 23 runs while Wanindu Hasaranga finished things off in style with an unbeaten 29 off 12 balls with four fours and a six.

Dhananjaya de Silva was named Man of the Match for his unbeaten 29 and three wickets.

Bowling in death overs for RR boosted my confidence: Chahal

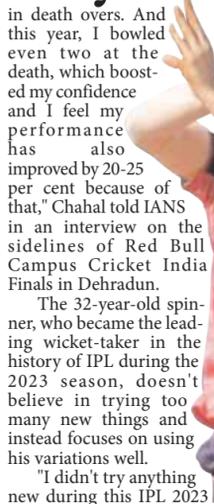
IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Premier India leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal has revealed that bowling in the death overs for Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2023 boosted his confidence and had a huge impact in improving his performances in the cash-rich league.

While playing for Royal Challengers Bangalore at M. Chinnaswamy Stadium for many years, Chahal mostly used to finish bowling his quota in the middle overs. However, things changed when he joined Rajasthan Royals in 2022.

In the IPL 2022 season, Chahal won the Purple Cap after picking up 27 wickets, out of which seven came at the death. And in IPL 2023, the leg-spinner was used even more in death overs and he finished the recently-concluded season with 21 wickets in 14 matches.

"When I joined Rajasthan Royals last year, Sanju Samson (skipper) told me that I have to bowl at least one over



in death overs. And this year, I bowled even two, which boosted my confidence and I feel my performance has also improved by 20-25 per cent because of that," Chahal told IANS in an interview on the sidelines of Red Bull Campus Cricket India Finals in Dehradun.

The 32-year-old spinner, who became the leading wicket-taker in the history of IPL during the 2023 season, doesn't believe in trying too many new things and instead focuses on using his variations well.

"I didn't try anything new during this IPL 2023 season. Having four-five variations is enough for me and I focus only on how to use that properly," he said.

Though Chahal had a good season with the ball, his team Rajasthan Royals, who were runners-up last season, failed to qualify for the Playoffs as they finished fifth with 14 points.

"It's (winning and losing) part of the process, you can not pinpoint a single player or a particular thing, where it went wrong for us. As a team, we win together and we lose together as well. Over the years, teams have lost the plot in the mid-season; ups and downs are part and parcel of a long tournament like the IPL. We hope to not repeat the same mistakes next year," the leg-spinner said.

While playing for the

Indian team or Rajasthan Royals, Chahal has good quality spinners around him, which often leads to competition. However, as per Chahal, he always looks to learn from his teammates and feels bowling in partnership is crucial.

"Whether it's the seniors or juniors, you always try to learn from everyone. For me, bowling in partnership is very important; sometimes you have to contain runs from one end, sometimes others do it from the other end and you get wickets. The same goes for batting as well," he said.

Despite being India's premier leg-spinner, Chahal has been very unfortunate and is yet to play a T20 World Cup match.

The right-hand leg-spinner was not picked in India's squad for the 2021 T20 World Cup and in the 2023 edition of the same tournament in Australia, he was part of the squad but didn't get the chance to play a single match under the management of Rohit Sharma and Rahul Dravid.

IPL changed monopoly of international cricket: Cummins

PTI ■ BECKENHAM (UK)

The IPL has ended the monopoly of international cricket on players' time, said Australia captain Pat Cummins, who feels going forward it will be a challenge to persuade players to prioritise national duty over franchise cricket.

Cummins agrees that Trent Boult's decision to deny a New Zealand central contract for lucrative T20 league around the world has been in the offing since IPL changed the complexion of the game a decade ago.

"It's been coming for a while, but I think it is here now," Cummins was quoted as saying by Sydney Morning Herald ahead of the World Test Championship Final against India at The Oval starting June 7.

"International cricket doesn't have a monopoly on play-



franchise-based leagues. "We have to keep making playing for Australia as special as we can, keeping a high performance to get every single player wanting to play for Australia as much as we can. That's going to be the challenge."

"I think it's upon us now, and we've got to start thinking about that quite deeply. I think fast-forward a few years time, a 12-month international calendar might look a little bit different," the pace spearhead said.

Cummins believes cricket is going soccer's way and there will be a time when national teams will need clearances from franchises to play for the country.

"When you're talking about some of the opportunities that may be provided through the franchises, I don't think you can blame players that might take that option," he said.

PSG lose on Messi farewell

AFP ■ PARIS

Messi's expected departure from the French giants after two seasons was officially confirmed by PSG in a statement shortly before Saturday's match against Clermont.

"His contribution to Paris Saint-Germain and Ligue 1 cannot be underestimated and we wish Leo and his family all the best for the future," said PSG president Nasser al-Khelaifi.

Yet Messi, who ends his PSG career with 32 goals in 75 appearances, was jeered by some fans during the match, which the champions lost 3-2.

There was little riding on the game itself after PSG wrapped up a record 11th French title last weekend, and Christophe Galtier's side contrived to throw away a two-goal lead.

Sergio Ramos, whose own departure from PSG was confirmed on Friday, marked his final appearance by heading in a Vitinha cross for the opener in the 16th minute.

Rico tribute
Mbappe, looking to end a fifth consecutive campaign as Ligue 1's top scorer, then scored a penalty to make it 2-0 with his 29th league goal this season, which he marked by holding up Sergio Rico's number 16 jersey.

Spaniard Rico, PSG's back-up goalkeeper, is in a serious condition in hospital in Seville after being injured in a horse-riding accident last weekend.



goalkeeper, is in a serious condition in hospital in Seville after being injured in a horse-riding accident last weekend.

Marco Verratti mistake to pull a goal back for Clermont, who then saw Grejohn Kyei miss a penalty. The visitors equalised in first-half stoppage time through Mehdi Zeffane, and Kyei secured a famous win in the second half as they end the season in eighth place.

Kylian Mbappe holds up Sergio Rico's jersey after scoring for PSG against Clermont © FRANCK FIFE / AFP

"The most important thing was the tribute to Sergio," Mbappe told broadcaster Canal Plus after

PSG suffered a seventh league defeat in 2023.

"There are more important things than football, and on the pitch we were already champions. We could have lost 22-0 and that would not have changed anything for us.

"We had to pay tribute to Sergio. I think we have all been affected by what is an extremely serious situation. We have been worried about that all week and so we tried to pay tribute in the best possible way."

Mbappe's goals tally left him two ahead of Lyon's Alexandre Lacazette in the final standings.

Asked about his own future in Paris, France star Mbappe said: "I am just here to play. I am still under contract. The club is doing what it can and I will be happy with whatever the club does."

Rennes go into Europa League PSG end the season a point clear of runners-up Lens, who completed a fine campaign with a 3-1 win away at Auxerre in which Alexis Claude-Maurice scored twice and Lois Openda got his 21st goal in Ligue 1.

That result allowed Nantes to climb out of the relegation zone and above Auxerre with a 1-0 win over Angers, as Auxerre return to the second tier after just one season back in the elite.

Angers, Troyes and Ajaccio had already been condemned to

the drop with four teams going down and only two coming up as France's top flight is reduced from 20 clubs to 18 for next season.

Marseille, who were already guaranteed third and a place in the Champions League qualifying rounds, lost 1-0 at Ajaccio in their first game after coach Igor Tudor announced his departure.

Auxerre were relegated after their defeat against Lens combined with a win for Nantes against Angers © ARNAUD FINISTRE / AFP

In the battle for the remaining European places, Lille began the day in fourth, a point above Rennes and Monaco.

However, Lille were held to a 1-1 draw at Troyes, allowing Rennes to climb above them thanks to a 2-1 victory at Brest in which Benjamin Bourigeaud scored both their goals.

Rennes therefore go into next season's Europa League group stage, while Lille will enter the Europa Conference League in the play-off round.

Monaco, beaten 2-1 at home by Toulouse, finish sixth and miss out on European qualification altogether.

Elsewhere on Saturday, Nice beat Lyon 3-1, while Lorient were 2-1 winners against Strasbourg and Folarin Balogun scored his 21st goal this season as Reims lost 3-1 to Montpellier.



Real Madrid great Benzema to leave club

AFP ■ MADRID

The 35-year-old forward has been heavily linked this week with a lucrative move to Saudi Arabia and Saudi state television channel Al-Ekhbariya reported Sunday that he had signed with Jeddah-based Al-Ittihad.

"Real Madrid and our captain Karim Benzema have agreed to put an end to his brilliant and unforgettable era as a player at our club," said Los Blancos in a statement.

"Madrid want to show their gratitude and all their love to someone who is one of our greatest legends."

The announcement comes after Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti had said Saturday there was "no doubt" about Benzema's future being at Madrid, noting the forward had one more year left on his contract. And Benzema himself had said "not everything you read on the internet is reality" after reports emerged in the week about his potential departure to Saudi Arabia, where his former Real Madrid teammate Cristiano Ronaldo is playing for Al Nassr.

According to Al-Ekhbariya, however, the president of Saudi champions Al-Ittihad and his deputy were in Madrid "to officially sign" Benzema in a "record transfer with Real Madrid".

The TV channel said Benzema had agreed a two-year deal with the club, based on the Red Sea shores of the Gulf kingdom.

Leaving Lyon
The French forward joined

Madrid in 2009 from Ligue 1 side Lyon.

Benzema established himself as a key player alongside Ronaldo and Gareth Bale in the vaunted "BBC" attacking trident, before developing into the team's leader when the Portuguese striker left in 2018.

Benzema has lifted five Champions Leagues, four La Liga titles and three Copas del Rey with Real Madrid and is the current holder of the Ballon d'Or for the world's best player.

He is Real Madrid's second top scorer of all-time, with 353 goals for Madrid, behind only Ronaldo at 450.

Benzema's final appearance for the club could be later Sunday when Madrid host Athletic Bilbao in La Liga at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Madrid confirmed Saturday that Eden Hazard, Marco Asensio and Mariano Diaz are all leaving this summer too, leaving plenty of space for new acquisitions in attack.

Ancelotti avoided talking on Saturday about Madrid's alleged interest in England and Tottenham striker Harry Kane.

"I'm not going to talk about the future of the squad that is in place," said Ancelotti.

"Kane is a great player, he is a Tottenham player, we have to respect the player and Tottenham."

Rise to glory
Benzema battled with Gonzalo Higuain for a regular starting spot in his early days at Madrid, and was once derided by then-coach Jose Mourinho for being a "cat" instead of the "hunting dog" he wanted.

Happy for men to take French Open night sessions: Gauff

AFP ■ PARIS

In 2022, only one of 10 night sessions at Roland Garros featured a women's singles match.

This year saw the first six nights also feature only men's singles with Sunday's last-16 clash between Aryna Sabalenka and Sloane Stephens set to be the first women's match at the seventh time of asking.

"I don't know if the night session amongst the players is a popular hotspot, to be honest," said American world number six Gauff.

"I guess for the TV and that's the prime spot, maybe yes, it does suck in that sense. But amongst the players and from my conversations, I don't think a lot of people want that spot just because it is a late night."

The 19-year-old added: "I don't know if Sloane or Aryna wanted to

play at that time, but I know the ones I spoke to, no one really wants the night session.

"We were happy with the men taking it."

Last year, tournament director Amelie Mauresmo, a former world number one and two-time Grand Slam title winner, caused a stir by saying men's matches were more attractive.

However, she insisted her remarks were taken out of context.

On Saturday, there were reports that fans were offering their Sunday night session tickets back for resale.

Men's world number one Carlos Alcaraz and 22-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic are both playing in the day time on Sunday.

They form part of a three-match daytime session on Court Philippe Chatrier with the most expensive



ticket, according to the tournament's own website, priced at 245

euros -- an average of just over 80 euros per match.

The one match on Sunday evening, however, comes with a top price of 180 euros.

World number seven Ons Jabeur believes the best way forward is to follow the lead of the Australian and US Opens and schedule a men's and a women's match side-by-side in the night sessions.

That would mean an earlier start than the current 2030 (1830GMT) slot or run the risk of ending deep in the early hours of the following morning.

Saturday night's match, which saw Alexander Zverev defeat Frances Tiafoe in four sets, finished at 0015 local time on Sunday (2215GMT).

"It was high time to put a night session with a female match. It's a bit strange that we didn't have the two matches, man and woman," said Tunisian player Jabeur.

My suffering worth it for Champions League win, says Barca's Putellas



AFP ■ EINDHOVEN (NETHERLANDS)

The two-time Ballon d'Or winner came on as a substitute as her side beat Wolfsburg 3-2 in Eindhoven, after falling two goals behind.

Playmaker Putellas, who won the competition with Barcelona in 2021 in their maiden victory, has missed most of the season with a knee issue.

"I'm happy, it's been a tough year but all the suffering I've been through has been worth it

for this moment," she told DAZN.

"It tastes so good, objective complete. This year we had in mind that we wanted to win it, for how last year ended."

Barcelona were beaten 3-1 by record eight-time winners Lyon last season, and the French side hit three first-half goals against the shell-shocked Catalans.

Ewa Pajor struck in the third minute this year, with Alexandra Popp doubling the lead before the break.

Barcelona came back with Patri Guijarro's brace and Fridolina Rolfö fired home the winner.

"Alexia gave me her energy and I did a bit of what she does," said Guijarro, player of the match.

"It's incredible (to win), above all for how we did it, coming from two down in a final is so difficult."

England defender Lucy Bronze said she had no doubts her team would be able to fire their way back to victory.

"I don't think we were ever worried about scoring three goals, which is a crazy feat to do, and that's the talent of this team," Bronze told DAZN.

The right-back last played in April and had surgery on a knee injury, and was caught out for Pajor's opener, harried into losing the ball by Poland attacker Pajor.

"We made it hard for ourselves in the first half," admitted Bronze.

"(Although) we created so many chances I think we could have scored many goals in the first half.

"We knew with our quality we could come back into any game."

Israel stun Brazil 3-2 to qualify for Under-20 World Cup semis

AFP ■ SAN JUAN (ARGENTINA)

Israel produced one of the biggest wins in its football history on Saturday, stunning Brazil 3-2 in extra time to qualify for the semi-finals of the Under-20 World Cup.

A tightly contested encounter saw Israel come back from behind twice before grabbing the shock victory through Dor Turgeman's brilliant solo strike.

The Israelis will face either Uruguay or the United States in the semi-finals.

After a scoreless first half at the Bicentenario stadium, Brazil, five-times winners of the tournament, broke through in the 56th minute on Marcos Leonardo's superbly-taken, first-time left-foot shot.

Anan Khalaili brought Israel level, rising at the back post to angle home a header from a pinpoint El Yam Kancepolski cross in the 60th minute, delighting a largely pro-Israel crowd in the stands.

But Israel's hopes dimmed just 20 seconds into extra time, when Andrey Santos set up Matheus Nascimento to restore

Brazil's lead.

Just two minutes later, however, Hamza Shibli equalized, tapping in a low ball from Ilay Feingold at the back post to make it 2-2.

The decisive goal came, near the end of the first period of extra-time, when Turgeman collected the ball on the edge of the box, jinked cleverly past two defenders and then fired past Kaique Pereira.

Ilay Madmon and Ahmad Ibrahim would both miss penalties for Israel in the second period of extra-time, but Ofir Haim's side were able to hold on.

"When I was a kid, I used to play a lot in the neighbourhood, outside my house and I used to always try to pull off things like that, so I think the goal came from there," said Turgeman.

"I'm really thrilled and proud of it. I'm so emotional. I'm very happy that I've made all Israelis happy. This is huge for my country. It's unbelievable."

Brazil were fancied by many pundits to continue their excellent record in this tournament and Tay Abed said they knew the odds were stacked against them.

FA Cup final defeat clouds Manchester United's season

AFP ■ LONDON

Manchester United's painful FA Cup final defeat to Manchester City casts a cloud over a largely impressive season under Erik ten Hag in which they ended their trophy drought and regained their place in the Champions League.

City's captain fantastic Ilkay Gundogan scored twice in a 2-1 win for the Premier League champions at Wembley -- including the fastest goal in FA Cup final history -- as his side stayed on track for a treble.

Ten Hag, in his first cam-

paigned at Old Trafford, praised his men for their performance against "probably the best team in the world" before reflecting on the overall campaign.

"We played a fantastic season and it's more than we could have expected before," he said.

"We were third in the league, we are qualified for the Champions League, and we won a trophy and we were in another final.

"So, yeah, I'm really happy with the performance from my team all over."

close at Wembley, Pep Guardiola's men were in control for most of the match against his largely toothless side.

Highs and lows
United's campaign is difficult to sum up.

They beat Newcastle in the League Cup final in February to lift their first silverware since 2017 and finished third in the Premier League.

But their season has been also peppered with heavy defeats -- they were mauled 4-0 by Brentford, 6-3 by Manchester City and 7-0 by Liverpool.



to make the Premier League a three-horse race but in the end they finished 14 points behind City in the table, with just one more point than they achieved in the 2020/21 season under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

Marcus Rashford's career-best 30 goals in all competitions papered over the cracks up front, with United short of alternative firepower.

Forward Anthony Martial and winger Antony were unfit for the final at Wembley, leaving Wout Weghorst -- who has failed to score a single Premier League goal since he arrived on loan in January -- as one of Ten Hag's attacking options.

By contrast, City had a bench packed with attacking quality, including Julian Alvarez, Riyad Mahrez and Phil Foden.

Another expensive summer rebuild is required to get United back to the standards Ten Hag demands.

The club has been strongly linked with Tottenham and England forward Harry Kane but could face a tough battle to prise him from the hands of Spurs chairman Daniel Levy.

The position of goalkeeper is also a major talking point after several high-profile errors from David de Gea in recent weeks.

The Spaniard, who won the Premier League Golden Glove award, was slow to react to Gundogan's shot for the second goal.

De Gea has yet to sign a new contract at Old Trafford even though his deal expires in a matter of weeks.

Ten Hag avoided commenting on his goalkeeper's performance, saying "we played all a great season, including David De Gea."

The situation at United is complicated by uncertainty over the ownership of the club, which could impact transfer plans during the summer window.