

OPINION 6
DARWIN BEYOND
WESTERN PEDAGOGY

WORLD 9
VIDEO SHOWS 'UNSAFE CHINESE
MANOEUVRE' IN TAIWAN STRAIT

MONEY 10
SENSEX, NIFTY SETTLE HIGHER
FOR SECOND STRAIGHT DAY

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IBRAHIMOVIC
ANNOUNCES
RETIREMENT
11 SPORT



CAPSULE

1 DEAD IN HEMKUND SAHIB AVALANCHE
Gopeshwar: The body of a woman pilgrim returning from the Hemkund Sahib who got trapped during an avalanche here in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district was recovered from under a glacier on Monday, officials said.

ED SEARCHES IN RAJ ANTICIPATED: GEHLOT
Jaipur: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Monday accused the Centre of misusing its investigative agencies and said the Enforcement Directorate (ED) searches in the State were "anticipated" as the Assembly elections are approaching. The ED conducted searches at multiple locations in Raj during the day in connection with a money laundering investigation.

3 CRPF PERSONNEL INJURED IN NAXAL BLAST
Raipur: Three personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were on Monday injured under a pressure improvised explosive device (IED) planted by Naxalites went off in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, officials said.

ARIKOMBAN TRANQUILISED TO BE TRANSLOCATED
Chennai: A team of forest officials, who have been tracking the movement of the wild tusker Arikomban, located the elephant and tranquilised it early on Monday. Currently, efforts are on to translocate the tusker to a suitable habitat, Additional Chief Secretary, Environment, Climate Change and Forests, Tamil Nadu, Supriya Saha said on Monday.

Wrestlers resume Rly jobs, fight for justice continues

Will stay united till justice is served: Sakshi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After resuming their duties in the Indian Railways, Olympic medalists Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia on Friday firmly asserted that none of the wrestlers involved in the protest have relented, stating that they will continue their pursuit of justice. They dismissed rumours of their withdrawal from the protest as deliberate attempts to undermine the movement.

Officials of the Northern Railways have confirmed that Sakshi Malik has returned to her duties along with Bajrang Punia and Vinesh Phogat.

Punia clarified that the news of their withdrawal was merely a "rumour" and refuted claims that the women wrestlers had retracted their First Information Report (FIR) against the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) outgoing chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

Together with fellow Olympian and World



Championship medalist Vinesh Phogat, Bajrang and Sakshi have been actively protesting against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who has been accused of sexually harassing seven wrestlers, including a minor girl. Singh has denied all allegations.

Regarding their meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday, Malik informed reporters that it was a "routine discussion" and no definitive resolution had been reached. She emphasised that their stance remained unchanged, calling for the arrest of the accused. Vinesh, Bajrang, and Sakshi affirmed

their solidarity in this fight, declaring that they would stay united until "justice is served." Addressing reports suggesting that she and Punia had withdrawn from the protest after resuming their duties in the Railways, Malik denounced the news as "completely false." Phogat had also resumed her responsibilities in the Railways. "In our quest for justice, none of us has retreated, nor will we. Alongside our peaceful protest, I am fulfilling my duties in the Railways. Our struggle persists until justice prevails. Please refrain from spreading misinformation," Malik tweeted.

Punia also denounced the news, asserting, "These false reports aim to harm us. We have not retreated or withdrawn from the movement. The claim that women wrestlers have withdrawn the FIR is also baseless. Our fight will continue until justice is served."

Responding to questions about her involvement in the protest following her return to Railways duties, Malik clarified, "Let me make it clear that we are strategising our future course of action. We are working on how to further the protest without resorting to violence."

"As an Officer on Special Duty (OSD), I have various responsibilities. While we pause our strategy and temporarily pause the protest, I will fulfill my official duties. I have been attending to my responsibilities in the Railways for the past few days," she added.

Refuting reports that the minor girl had withdrawn her FIR, Malik stated, "These fabrications are intended to undermine our non-violent protest and isolate us from the public. This is false. We have not wavered in our fight, nor will we. Our struggle will continue until justice is achieved."

Continued on Page 2

Mukhtar Ansari gets life for 1991 murder

PNS ■ VARANASI

The Special MP-MLA Court in Varanasi on Monday awarded life sentence to former gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari for the murder of Awadhesh Rai, the brother of Congress leader Ajay Rai, more than 30 years ago.

Ajay Rai, president of the Prayagraj region of the Congress and brother of Awadhesh Rai, expressed his satisfaction with the verdict.

The incident occurred on August 3, 1991, when Awadhesh was shot down at the gate of his residence in Lahurabir, Varanasi. Ansari among others were named as accused in the case.

The trial for the murder of Awadhesh concluded on May 19 this year, and Special Court (MP-MLA) Judge Avanih Gautam reserved the order for June 5. On Monday, the court sentenced Ansari to life imprisonment and imposed a fine of ₹1.20 lakh. Presently incarcerated in Banda Jail, Ansari participated in the court proceedings via video conference.



In this December 28, 2022, file photo, gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari being produced at district court, in Prayagraj PTI

Ansari has faced 61 criminal cases across different States, out of which he has been convicted in six. In April, he was sentenced to 10 years in jail by a court in Ghazipur under the Gangsters Act.

Strict security measures were put in place within the court premises during the announcement of the verdict. It was revealed during the June 2022 hearings that the original case diary was missing.

Despite extensive efforts, the original case diary could not be located. A case was reg-

istered against Ansari for allegedly using his influence to destroy the original copy of the case diary. The trial proceeded based on the Xerox copies of the original case diary.

In 2022, Ansari and one of his aides, Bhim Singh, were convicted by a Ghazipur court in a Gangsters Act case related to the murder of Awadhesh Rai. Over the past year, Ansari has been convicted in four additional cases by different courts. However, this is the first time he has received a life sentence in any of the cases.

Ajay Rai expressed his satisfaction with the court's verdict, stating, "This marks the end of our 32-year-long struggle against a notorious criminal. My parents, Awadhesh's daughter, our entire family, and I remained patient... Governments came and went, and Mukhtar grew stronger. But we never gave up. Today, due to the efforts of our lawyers, the court has found Mukhtar guilty in the murder case of my brother."

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Rahul fires salvo at BJP, Modi in US



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addresses Indian diaspora at an event in New York on Sunday PTI

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has said that the BJP and the RSS are "incapable" of looking at the future and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is trying to drive the Indian car by only looking in the rearview mirror which will lead to "one accident after another."

Rahul addressed a massive community event at the Javits Centre organised by the Indian Overseas Congress — USA on Sunday as he wrapped up his US visit that included trips to San Francisco and Washington DC. "Back home we have a problem, and I will tell you the problem. BJP and the RSS are incapable of looking at the future. They're incapable. Unse aap kuch bhi poocho, woh peeche ki aur dekhte hain (You ask anything they look into the past)," he said.

He said that if you ask the BJP why a train accident hap-

pened, they will say the Congress did such and such thing 50 years ago, taking a swipe at the government following the Odisha train accident, one of the worst railway tragedies in the country.

Rahul said that if you ask the BJP why they removed the periodic table from the textbooks, they will refer to what the Congress party did 60 years ago. "Their immediate response" is to look back," he said, adding that one cannot drive a car by looking only in the rearview mirror as that will only lead to "one accident after another."

"That is the phenomenon of Narendra Modi ji. He is trying to drive the Indian car and he only looks in the rearview mirror. And then he does not understand why this car is crashing, not moving forward. And it's the same idea with the BJP, with the RSS, all of them."

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China's 'bullying' threat to nations, says Austin

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With ongoing tensions between China and India at the border in Ladakh, as well as China's aggressive posturing in the Indo-Pacific and South China Sea, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, during his visit to India, did not hesitate to describe such behaviour as a form of "bullying and coercion." He further emphasised that the India-US relationship serves as a "cornerstone" for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Austin made these remarks at a press conference held in New Delhi following detailed discussions with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. The two leaders thoroughly reviewed the situation in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region, including the ongoing situation at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) facing China.

Austin pointed out that China's actions include attempts to forcefully redraw borders, which poses a direct threat to the sovereignty of nations. He also highlighted the Russian aggression against Ukraine, which shares similar aims of changing borders through force and undermining national sovereignty.

Additionally, Austin emphasised the significance of collaborative military exercises between India and the United States. He acknowledged the existence of transnational issues such as terrorism and climate change in our rapidly changing world.

He stated, "So, democracies must now rally together around not only our common interests but also our shared values. Preserving and protecting the freedoms that are essential to peace and prosperity will require vigorous leadership from the United States and India. We still have a lot of work to do, but I am confident that the US-India partnership will help secure an open and prosperous future for the Indo-Pacific and the wider world."

Regarding the ties between India and the US,



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with his US counterpart Lloyd Austin before a bilateral meeting in New Delhi on Monday PTI

Austin reiterated that the partnership is a "cornerstone" for a free and open Indo-Pacific. He highlighted how the deepening ties demonstrate how technological innovation and growing military cooperation between the two "great powers" can contribute to global good.

Emphasising the importance of US-India cooperation, Austin expressed, "We all face a rapidly changing world. We witness bullying and coercion from the People's Republic of China and Russian aggression against Ukraine, which seek to redraw borders and threaten national sovereignty."

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Devise ways for fair flight tickets, Govt asks airlines

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) on Monday urged airlines to ensure checks on any abnormal surge in airfares, particularly during calamities, considering the recent train accident.

During the hour-long meeting with the Airlines Advisory Group, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia expressed concerns about the airfare surge on certain routes.

The ministry stressed the need for airlines to self-monitor airfares, especially on specific routes that have experienced a notable price hike, particularly those previously serviced by Go First. With Go First ceasing operations from May 3, the reduction in capacity due to the crisis coincides with the upcoming peak domestic air travel period.

Airlines have been requested to establish a mechanism for ensuring reasonable pricing within the high Reservation Booking Designators, which will be monitored by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), according to a statement from the ministry. Airfares are deregulated under the current framework.

The Ministry also stated that airlines should exercise strict control over ticket prices "in view of the humanitarian situation" during any calamity and monitor and regulate any surges in ticket prices to and from the affected region.

Continued on Page 2

Rich nations must rise above selfish interests to save climate: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

On the World Environment Day on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the poor and developing countries are paying the price for the "wrong policies" of some developed nations and stressed that India has been strongly raising the issue of climate justice with all such advanced and big countries at various forums.

In his video message at a World Environment Day event here, Modi said for the protection of climate it is important that all countries think, rising above selfish interests.

"For a long time, the model of development in big and advanced countries was contradictory. In this developmental model, the thinking was that we first develop our country then we can think about the environment," the Prime Minister said.

"With this they achieved the goals of development but the world's environment had to pay the price for their development. Today also, the developing and poor countries of the world are paying the price for the wrong policies of some developed countries," he said.

For decades no one was there to object to this attitude of the developed countries, Modi said, adding that, "I am happy that India has raised the question of climate justice with

all these countries."

Modi said India is focussing on the environment in a big way just like any other area for its growth. If India has expanded its 4G and 5G telecom networks, it has also enhanced its forest cover on an equal footing, he said.

Modi also touched upon the Jal Jeevan Mission and the construction of 50,000 Amrit Sarovars for water security, India becoming the 5th largest economy in the world and also joining the top 5 countries in renewable energy, increasing agricultural exports and also running a campaign for blending 20 percent ethanol in petrol. He also stated that India has become the base of organisations like Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and the International Big Cat Alliance.

"The theme of this year's World Environment Day is to get rid of single-use plastic, an issue about which the world is talking today but India has been working on it consistently for the last four-five years. In 2018 itself, India started working at two levels for getting rid of single-use plastic. On one hand, we banned single-use plastic and on the other hand we made the plastic waste processing mandatory," he said.

In the past nine years, India has focussed a lot on "green and clean energy," Modi said.

Shakuni mama no more

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Actor Gufi Paintal, best known for playing "Shakuni mama" in the epic TV serial "Mahabharat", died on Monday at a hospital in Andheri in Mumbai due to age-related issues, his nephew Hiten Paintal said.

The veteran actor, whose real name was Saravjit Singh Paintal, was 79. Paintal is survived by his son, daughter-in-law and a grandchild.

"Unfortunately, he is no more. He passed away at the hospital around 9 am. His heart gave up. He passed away peacefully in his sleep," Hiten told PTI.

Gufi Paintal's acting credits also include 1980s Hindi films such as "Suaag", "Dillagi",



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as well as television shows "CID" and "Hello Inspector", but his manipulative uncle act as Shakuni mama, the king of Gandhara region and master of the dice, from BR Chopra's "Mahabharat" made him a household name.

Paintal's last rites were held at 4.30 pm at the Oshwira Crematorium in Andheri.

"The last rites were performed by his son Harry. We had family and friends from the industry including Pankaj Dheer, and Surendra Pal, among others at the crematorium," Hiten said.

Actor Mukesh Khanna, who played Bhisma, said he had a long association with his "Mahabharat" co-star. "I had a long relationship with him since 'Mahabharat' and cast him in 'Shaktimaan' later. In 'Mahabharat', we had long confrontational scenes between each other. He was the one who called me for 'Mahabharat' and that marked the beginning of our association. He was the one who would call people, then there would be the audition," Khanna told PTI.

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IISc-Bengaluru top university in NIRF rankings; Miranda House best college

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras has once again secured the top spot among institutes in the country, maintaining its position for the fifth-consecutive year," announced Union Minister of State for Education Rajkumar Ranjan Singh on Monday.

In the universities category, IISc Bengaluru claimed the top position, followed by JNU

and Jamia Millia Islamia in second and third place, respectively. These institutions held the same positions as last year.

The eighth edition of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) shed light on an important observation: "Faculty with doctoral qualifications are predominantly concentrated in the top 100 institutions. However, this poses a serious challenge as mentorship during doctoral training plays a vital role in preparing the faculty for careers in higher education."

Among colleges, Miranda House, Hindu College and Presidency College-Chennai retained the first, second and third positions. Miranda House has been the top college for the seventh year in a row.



In the overall rankings, seven IITs — Madras, Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Roorkee, and Guwahati — secured places within the top 10. Noteworthy advancements were made by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), climbing from ninth to sixth position this year. Meanwhile, Jawaharlal Nehru University retained its tenth spot in the overall category.

The ranking framework assesses institutions based on five broad parameters: Teaching, learning and resources; research and professional practice; graduation outcomes; outreach and inclusivity; and perception. The ranks are determined by the total sum of marks assigned to each of these five parameters.

Jamia Millia Islamia Vice-Chancellor, Najma Akhtar, expressed delight at the university's progress, having improved from the 83rd rank in 2016 to the third rank in 2022. She attributed this achievement to the improved perception of the university's teaching and research.

Banaras Hindu University showed improvement, climbing from sixth to fifth place in the

category, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham in Coimbatore, Calcutta University, Vellore Institute of Technology, Aligarh Muslim University, and University of Hyderabad secured subsequent positions in the universities category.

In the engineering institutions category, eight IITs — Madras, Delhi, Bombay, Kanpur, Roorkee, Kharagpur, Guwahati, and Hyderabad — dominated the top 10 ranks. The National Institute of Technology (NIT) Tiruchirappalli slipped one spot, securing the ninth rank, while Jadavpur University made its entry into the top 10, securing the tenth position.

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IFSO arrests gang for pan-India loan fraud

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operation (IFSO) of Delhi Police have busted an extortion gang that has duped nearly 2,000 people across the country on the pretext of providing them instant loans. Six of its members, who were operating the gang from different parts of the country, have also been arrested, police said.

The accused have been identified as Anisbhai Ashrabhai Vinchi (51) and Mustajab Gulam Mohammed Naviwala (32), residents of Gujarat, Gokul Biswas (53), a resident of West Bengal, Ashok (36), Balwant (39) and Nitin (24), residents of Delhi, they said. According to police, the gang has cheated 1,977 people across the nation.

One Jai Goyal alleged that some people were blackmailing and extorting money from the citizens on the pretext of providing instant loans by getting access to their mobile data illegally through a loan application called Cash Advance, a senior police officer said.



During investigation, police traced the accused at different locations and nabbed them following raids, Deputy Commissioner of Police (IFSO) Prashant Gautam said.

The gang used to offer short-term loans to users at very low-interest rates through the application and then get access to their data during its installation, the DCP said.

However, after giving the money through digital modes, they used to raise the interest rates exorbitantly and even after the repayment of the loan, they used to demand more money from the borrowers or their relatives by

threatening them using their morphed pictures, police said.

Gokul, Mustajab, Anisbhai, Ashok and Balwant had registered the companies and opened their bank accounts. An amount of around Rs 350 crore was circulated in these accounts out of which Rs 83 crore was again disbursed as microloan to various persons after deducting the commission, police said.

Nitin, who had worked in a Chinese loan application company as a team leader earlier, was well versed with the working of loan applications and recovery process, they added.

Activist for probe into illegal mining on Raigad beaches

TR RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After flagging the issue of illegal mining that has been going on in the picturesque beaches of Raigad district over the years, noted activist Sumaira Abdulali of Awaz Foundation on Monday demanded a full-fledged investigation into the "systematic sand mining operation" taking place at Kihim and Awaz beaches and immediate halt to such activities.

Having complained periodically to the revenue authorities, Sumaira - known for her crusade against the raising noise pollution levels in Mumbai - has upped the ante by writing to Raigad District Collector Yogesh Mhase and producing evidence of ongoing "illegal" mining at Kihim beach.

"I have been complaining about sand mining at this site for nearly 20 years after I was attacked by the sand mafia at Kihim in 2004. The police and government have periodically taken action. However, post Covid-19 lockdown, sand mining has resumed and escalated,



now covering a vast area of the beach," she said.

"Based on my complaint, local talathi of Kihim V. Shigade visited the spot along with me on May 26 and photographed the mining spots. The photographs show the scale and extent of sand mining. Depths of the craters which are over 6 feet deep on the beach are clearly visible. They constitute a danger to people walking on the beach," Sumaira said in a memorandum submitted to the district collector.

"Additionally, numerous coconut and other trees have already fallen over the years after the land they stand on has been eroded. The depth of the

beach has fallen by over 12 feet in places and several other trees hang precariously by their roots. Sand mining happens directly in front of these endangered trees, further escalating the risk," she said.

"A path which has been built from Awaz to Kihim beaches and rocks from the creek which divides the two have been cleared to facilitate crossing from Awaz to Kihim beaches. The rocks are used for illegal reclamation of Awaz beach, which reclamation is still in progress today. Thus, the land on the Awaz side is increasing due to reclamation while land on the Kihim side is eroding due to sand mining," she said.

LJP (Ram Vilas) writes to LG for compensating Shahabad Dairy victim's family

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Delhi unit of LJP (Ram Vilas) in a memorandum to Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has demanded compensation of Rs one crore and a government job to family members of the minor girl who was killed in the Shahabad Dairy area last month, the party said in a statement.

President of the Delhi unit of Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) Ram Vilas, Shankar Mishra said that the party has also demanded proper action to ensure that such "heinous" crimes do not take place in future.

The party has demanded that the trial in the murder case be conducted in a fast-track court, he said.

Bikas Singh, youth wing president of the party said its workers also staged a demonstration near the residence of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to lodge their protest over the incident.

Singh said the party has demanded Rs one crore as compensation for the victim's family along with a government job for one of the members of her family, he said.

The memorandum submitted to the LG by the party leaders has also said that the accused be given the death penalty for the horrific offence, he added.

Rahul fires salvo at BJP, Modi in...

From Page 1

He said that when a train accident happened when the Congress party was in power, it did not say "it is the fault of the British that the train has crashed. No. The Congress minister remember said it is my responsibility the train has crashed. I'm resigning," Rahul said.

"There is a fight going on back home - a fight between two ideologies. One that we

represent and the other of course that the BJP and the RSS represent. I think the simplest way to describe this fight is on one side you have Mahatma Gandhi and on the other side, you have Nathuram Godse," the 52-year-old former Congress president said at the community event.

Referring to Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress leader

said that on one side there is a "brave man," "NRI like you. In fact, probably the most impactful NRI that India has had in many, many years. Humble man, a simple man, but a man who believed in the future, who believed in India, propagated non-violence and search for the truth. That's the ideology that we follow. That's the ideology that all of you follow in this room.

Mukhtar Ansari gets...

From Page 1

Ansari's counsel requested the court to consider the convict's age while pronouncing the judgment. The lawyer stated that they would appeal to a higher court after thoroughly reviewing the verdict.

When asked about the response from Ansari's lawyer, Rai stated, "We will fight all the way to the Supreme Court. We fought for 32 years, and we will

continue to do so."

On the fateful day of August 3, 1991, Ajay Rai and his brother were standing at the gate of their house in the Chatganj police station area when assailants, including Mukhtar Ansari, arrived in a car and shot Awadhesh. Ajay Rai retaliated by firing from his licensed pistol, causing the assailants to flee, leaving behind the car.

Devise ways for fair flight tickets, Govt asks...

From Page 1

In light of the tragic incident in Odisha, airlines have been advised to provide free carriage (cargo) services to the families of the deceased, the ministry added. Since the deregulation of India's airline sector, airfares have been market-driven and are neither

established nor regulated by the government. Airline pricing operates on multiple levels known as Reservation Booking Designators (RBDs).

In a statement to the Lok Sabha on March 16, Scindia highlighted that "airfares are neither established nor regulated by the government."

PUBLIC NOTICE
Be it known to all that I, Puneet Rakhija S/o H. Rakhija & Surbhi Rakhija W/o Puneet Rakhija R/o-8-42, Shankar Garden, Vikas Puri, Delhi-110017, am the Legal Owner of Plot No. 694, Pk-4, Sec-34, Rohini, Delhi-110023. (F. No. 117/18/2012/RNH which is allotted by the DDA, Original Allotment Letter, Handing over Possession Slip of the Plot, etc. are available for inspection at the DDA Office, Plot No. 694, Pk-4, Sec-34, Rohini, Delhi-110023. Any person claiming any right, interest, or having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 926674505 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. Any person claiming any right, interest, or having any objections with respect to this property can also personally inform/contact me.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Known to all that my client Pushpata Agarwal is owner of Plot No. 214/7, Area 22 Sq. Yards part of Property No. 214, Plot No. 2, Bagh Mureed Khan, Padam Nagar, Village Sadhara Khurd, Kishan Ganj, Delhi-110077 and mortgaging the same with Unity Small Finance Bank Ltd. and Pushpata Agarwal have not Original 1. Sale deed and Supplementary deed in favour of Preet Singh, 2. ATS and Will in favour of Preet Singh, 3. G.P.A. ATS Will in favour of Preet Singh, 4. Any person claiming any right, interest, or having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 926674505 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. Any person claiming any right, interest, or having any objections with respect to this property can also personally inform/contact me.

Public Notice
BE IT KNOWN TO ALL THAT my client Mrs PUSHPA GOEL W/o Late K.K. Goel R/o Krishna Convent School, Kayasthpora, Sikandrabad 202025 (U.P.) do hereby debar and deprive her son Shivam Goel to claim any right, title or interest in any movable and immovable properties in her name thereof. My client is forced to take this harsh step due to matrimonial disputes of her son with his wife and insulting behavior of her son's family which has affected her health adversely."

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all, SUSHMA GUPTA W/O SH. SUNIL KUMAR AGGARWAL R/O F-7A/149, FIRST FLOOR, SECTOR-16, ROHINI, DELHI-110089 Purchaser/Owner Of Dda Janta Flat No. 149, First Floor, Pocket-7A, Block-F, Sector-16, Rohini, Delhi have applied for conversion of the aforesaid flat from lease hold to free hold in DDA. The original documents i.e. DEMAND/ALLOTMENT LETTER, POSSESSION LETTER, NOC FOR WATER AND ELECTRICITY CONNECTION, SITE POSSESSION SLIP & OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS of the above said flat has been lost. An F.I.R./NCR/LR No. 518345/2023 dated 05/06/2023 on this effect has been lodged in P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No. 9971099347 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director (Housing)-Janta or Director (H)-Janta, Delhi Development Authority, Vikas Sadan, New Delhi-110023.

China's 'bullying' behaviour threat...

From Page 1

Austin also mentioned, "We have established an ambitious new roadmap for defense industrial cooperation with a fast-track, high-priority focus on co-development and co-production projects, as well as building closer ties between our

defense industries." Looking forward, he expressed eagerness to advance some of these projects during the upcoming visits, indirectly referring to the forthcoming tour of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the United States. During the discussions,

both sides explored ways to enhance information sharing and discussed new initiatives to improve maritime cooperation, particularly in the undersea domain. Concluding his remarks at the media briefing, Austin emphasised the unique role of

India and the United States as the world's two largest democracies in preserving the rules-based international order that ensures the security of all nations. He described his talks with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval as "productive."

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

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Kamaliyet Kaur, Balbir Singh, C-92, Khasra No. 16/19 Village, Colony Uday Bihar Nilothi Extn, Delhi, A/c No. LBLUD00004690198	House Bearing Corporation No. B-31-1716/B/P-22-B, Khasra No. 505, 507, Khata No. 470/505, 472/507, Jamabandi Year 2007-2008, Hadabasi No. 172, Village Taraf Saidan, Abadi Ajeet Nagar, Tibba Road, Tehsil & District Ludhiana, Punjab	23/03/2023 Rs. 15,25,819/-	03/01/2023
1.	Karan Singh, Anu Priya, House No.200, Sukrat Nain Farm House, Narwana Tohana Road Kanheri, Fatehabad, Haryana, Fatehabad, A/c No. LBPAT00005577143	Flat No.6186, 6th Floor, Tower/ Block No.2, Sbp Housing Park, Village Rouni, Tehsil Derabassi, S.A.S., Nagar, Punjab	23/03/2023 Rs. 58,864/-	11/10/2022
2.	Karan Singh, Anu Priya, House No.200, Sukrat Nain Farm House, Narwana Tohana Road Kanheri, Fatehabad, Haryana, Fatehabad, A/c No. LBPAT00005484260	Flat No.6186, 6th Floor, Tower/ Block No.2, Sbp Housing Park, Village Rouni, Tehsil Derabassi, S.A.S., Nagar, Punjab	23/03/2023 Rs. 29,25,909/-	11/10/2022

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date : June 06, 2023
Place : Delhi/NCR
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

CHANGE OF NAME
I, Sarveen Ahuja alias Sarveen Chawla, W/o Sh. H R Chawla, R/o # 197 Sector 37, Faridabad, have changed my name from Sarveen Ahuja to Sarveen Chawla.

PD(054)C
I Tanuj Gautam Krishnan Chandra Gautam, S/o Krishnan Chandra Gautam R/o H no 75 Kendriya Lok Nirman Sahkari Awaz Samiti Ltd, Plot No 10, Sector P4 Builder's Area Greater Noida have changed my name from tanuj Gautam Krishnan Chandra Gautam to Tanuj Gautam for all future purposes.

PD(027)C
I Kamala Venkat W/o of Venkataraman resident of L043 Gulshan Vivante Apartments Sector 137 Noida have hereby changed the spouse name Viswanathan Venkataraman to Venkataraman as my spouse has changed in all government identity cards including Aadhar.

PD(055)A
I Venkataraman Son of Late Shri Viswanathan Resident of L043 Gulshan Vivante sector 137 Noida 201301 hereby change my name from Viswanathan Venkataraman to Venkataraman and have updated my government identity for all purpose.

PD(056)A

Shakuni mama no...

From Page 1

Dheer said Gufi Paintal was "a good friend" with whom he and co-star Puneet Issar spent a lot of time together on set as the villainous trio of Shakuni, Karn and Duryodhan. "He was a good friend and we did most of the scenes together in 'Mahabharat'. As Shakuni, he was very impressive. Till date people try to copy him but they are not able to reach his style of performance. It is a big loss for the industry," he added.

Cine & TV Artistes' Association (CINTAA) paid tribute to Gufi Paintal on Twitter. "CINTAA expresses

its condolences on the demise of Gufi Paintal (Member since Sept. 1992), the trade union posted. Actor Nimrat Kaur remembered the actor as "the indelible Shakuni Mama from our childhood days". "...such stellar contribution to the Indian cinematic landscape. Prayers and strength to the family. Rest in peace Gufi Paintal ji," she tweeted. "Dahaad" star Gulshan Devaiah shared Gufi Paintal's photo on Twitter to condole the actor's death.

"Sarabjeet Singh 'Gufi' Paintal. 4th October 1944-5 June 2023 #Shradhanjali," Devaiah wrote in the caption.

Wrestlers resume...

From Page 1

Punia expressed in a Hindi tweet, "Those who once belittled our medals, claiming they were worth only Rs 15, are now after our jobs. Our lives are at stake, and a job is insignificant compared to that. If our jobs become obstacles to justice, we won't hesitate for even a moment to quit. Don't try to intimidate us with employment."

Vinesh Phogat, a two-time Olympian, echoed the same sentiments in her Hindi tweet. She also questioned whether those spreading false information understand the anguish

endured by women wrestlers. "The feeble media trembles before the whip of a thug, not a female wrestler," she tweeted, citing a couplet from poet Abid Adeb's poem to emphasize their determination to persevere despite challenges.

During the march on May 28, several wrestlers protesting at Jantar Mantar were detained, and the distressing visuals of some being forcibly dragged and pinned to the ground by the Delhi police sparked nationwide outrage and drew strong reactions from political parties.

SPECIAL BRANCH POLICE HEADQUARTER, M.P., BHOPAL
No. SB/Store/2023-25 (147), Bhopal, Dated 30-05-2023

"ONLINE E-TENDER NOTICE"

E-tender are invited by Assistant Inspector General of Police, Special Branch (G) M.P., Bhopal on behalf of DGP MP Bhopal for the following item on website <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgep/app>:-

S. No.	Name of Item (s)	Qty.	Tender Fees (Rs.)	EMD (Rs.)	Tender No.
1	Safari Suit	301	2,000/-	35,000/-	1st Tender

- Cost of tender document (Tender Fee) is non refundable and cannot be exempted in any condition & must submit online through website <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgep/app>.
- Tender document can be download from the website of MP Police (www.mppolice.gov.in)
- Bids shall be submitted online only at MP Tenders website: <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgep/app>
- Tender Schedule :

No.	Tender Activity	Date & Time
i	Submission of written queries - through e-mail: sec25-sb@mppolice.gov.in	08/06/2023 up to 1600 hrs.
ii	Pre Bid Meeting along with written queries	09/06/2023 at 1100 hrs.
iii	Bid Submission Start Date	19/06/2023 at 1000 hrs.
iv	Last date of online e-Tender submission	28/06/2023 up to 1600 hrs.
v	Bid will be opened on	30/06/2023 up to 1600 hrs.
vi	Demonstration from	05/07/2023 at 11.00 hrs.

A.I.G. of Police
Special Branch (G) M.P. Bhopal
Tel. No. 0755-2443654

G-14201/23

IIT-M best for 5th time; JNU, JMI among top...

From Page 1
Director V Kamakoti of IIT Madras attributed their continued success in the NIRF rankings to "collective effort, continuous assessment, and improvement strategies." These rankings serve as a testament to the hard work and dedication exhibited by the institutions as they strive for excellence in the field of education and research.

Delhi University Vice Chancellor Yogesh Singh said that in the list of top 15 colleges of the country in NIRF 2023, nine colleges are from DU.

"I hope that next year University of Delhi and all its colleges would set records in all categories by giving even better results," he said.

IIM Ahmedabad and Bangalore retained the first and second ranks respectively among the B-Schools in the country. IIM Calcutta, which was in the third spot last year, slipped to the fourth position while IIM Kozhikode bagged the third position.

Professor Bharat Bhasker,

Director, IIMA, said, "We are delighted to be acknowledged as the best management institute in India by the Ministry of Education's NIRF 2023 rankings. This further strengthens our resolve to uphold high standards of excellence in every aspect of what we do and continue to contribute meaningfully to our nation's growth."

The National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research, Hyderabad bagged the top rank in Pharmacy for the first time pushing Jamia Hamdard to the second slot. Jamia Hamdard was ranked at the top in the category for four consecutive years.

Among the medical colleges, AIIMS, Delhi bagged the top spot, followed by PGIMER Chandigarh and Christian Medical College, Vellore. The trio bagged the same positions last year. AIIMS Delhi has occupied the top slot in the category for the sixth consecutive year.

Among the dental colleges, Saveetha Institute of Medical

And Technical Sciences-Chennai, Manipal College of Dental Sciences and DY Patil Vidyapeeth-Pune retained the top three positions.

"Changes in metrics, parameters and normalisation algorithms were introduced over the years, although the basic framework was kept intact," a senior ministry official said.

"As a result, the ranking of institutions has largely remained consistent, especially amongst 25 top-ranked institutions, over the years, although individual ranks might have changed by a few slots for some institutions due to performance variations across institutions on some of the parameters," the official said.

"All data for ranked institutions is painstakingly verified. Inconsistencies, contradictions and outliers are screened and identified with due diligence and patience.

"Institutions have to be dealt with tactfully as they feel offended with direct and blunt questions on the valid-

ity of data submitted by them. It requires a lot of patience in educating individual institutions on the quality requirements of the data submitted by them," the official added.

While from 2023, a new subject "Agriculture and Allied Sectors" has been introduced in NIRF, the "Innovation" ranking previously executed by the Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA) has been integrated into NIRF with an aim to reduce the burden on institutions of providing similar data to two different agencies.

The Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi has bagged the top slot in Agriculture and Allied Sectors.

With the addition of the new category (Innovation) subject domain (Agriculture and Allied Sectors) and expansion of "Architecture" to "Architecture and Planning", the existing portfolio of India Rankings has increased to 13 categories and subject domains.

5 DU colleges among top 10 in national ranking

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Five Delhi University colleges were among the top 10 colleges in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF 2023) rankings with Miranda House bagging the top spot for the seventh consecutive year and Hindu College has ranked second for a second time.

The DU's Atma Ram Sanatan Dharma College was ranked above Lady Shri Ram College and Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC) and was among the top 10 colleges in the country.

The Delhi University (DU) saw a marginal improvement in the Union Ministry of Education's National Institutional Ranking Framework announced on Monday as it climbed two



spots to attain the 11th rank among universities. In the overall rankings as well, DU's position improved to 22 from 23 last year. As per the NIRF, the DU is ranked behind the city-based Jawaharlal Nehru University and Jamia Millia Islamia, which retained the second and third positions

respectively under the university category. The eighth edition of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) was announced by Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. DU vice chancellor Prof. Yogesh Singh congratulated all the stake-

MIRANDA HOUSE BAGS TOP SPOT



holders for this achievement and said that it is the result of teamwork and hard work. Giving more information, he said that in the list of top 15 colleges of the country in NIRF 2023, 9 colleges are from University of Delhi. He said that this time DU has been ranked 22nd in the overall

ranking, while last year it was at the 23rd position. Congratulating all the stakeholders for these achievements, the Vice-Chancellor said that it is the result of collective efforts of teachers, students, principals, staff and everyone associated with DU. Last year, the DU was ranked 13th, while in 2021, it

stood at the 12th spot.

It was ranked 11th in 2020, 13th in 2019 and seventh in the university category in 2018. The rankings have been done in various categories like overall, universities, colleges and research institutions among others. In its overall ranking, the DU climbed to the 22nd rank. In 2021, it was ranked 19th, while in 2020 and 2019, it was ranked 18th and 20th respectively. In 2018, it bagged the 14th rank.

Five DU colleges were among the top 10 colleges in the country this year, with the Miranda House and the Hindu College retaining their rankings and bagging the top two spots. Atma Ram Sanatan Dharma College, which was ranked seventh last year, climbed a spot to bag the sixth position. Kirori Mal College (KMC) and Lady

Shri Ram College for Women (LSR) were also among the top 10 colleges.

Last year, LSR secured the fifth spot while KMC was ranked 10th. SRCC bagged the 11th spot while Hans Raj College, Sri Venkateswara College and St Stephen's bagged the 12th, 13th and 14th spots respectively.

Jamia Millia Islamia Vice Chancellor Najma Akhtar on Monday said the varsity had progressed from 83rd rank in 2016 to third rank in 2022 in the NIRF rankings, and attributed the achievement to improved perception about the university with regard to teaching and research.

"I am very happy that JMI once again figures among top three universities of the country. We have been consistent on our mettle making efforts to

improve the quality of teaching, learning and research in the university. In NIRF rankings, we have progressed from 83rd rank in 2016 to third rank in 2022, and we have retained it this year too," said Akhtar. She hoped that in coming years, the university will further improve its performance on all parameters.

The vice-chancellor said this remarkable achievement was possible because of the relevant, focused and meticulous research of highest quality and teaching by the dedicated and devoted faculty members of the university, and also the hard work put in by the non-teaching staff of the university. She also attributed the achievement to improved perception about the university with regard to teaching, placements, research, among others.

DU to launch BTech degree course from forthcoming academic session

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi University will introduce BTech programmes from the forthcoming academic session with a capacity of 360 students who will be admitted in three engineering courses through JEE Mains.

According to the official, the three courses which will be conducted by the Faculty of Technology are BTech Computer Science and Engineering, BTech Electronics and Communication Engineering, and BTech Electrical Engineering.

A proposal in the matter will be presented before the university's Executive Council on Friday, the official told PTI, adding the university received approval from the Ministry of Education in April for the creation of 72 teaching and 48 non-teaching posts for the new programmes.

The university had in 2021 constituted a committee to deliberate on the introduction of the new courses. "The committee held several meetings in



the last one-and-a-half years and systematically deliberated upon various issues within its terms of reference to facilitate the initiation of the three BTech programmes under the Faculty of Technology in the emerging subject areas of computer science and engineering, electronics and communication engineering and electrical engineering," an official said citing the report submitted by the panel.

The report states the university will use the Joint Entrance Examination (Mains) score obtained by an aspirant for admission to the BTech programmes. It said a proposal has

been submitted to the Union Ministry of Education for the construction of physical infrastructure for the Faculty of Technology which will take time on receipt of necessary financial and other statutory approvals.

The committee recommended that adequate arrangements for space be made for classrooms and laboratories for the BTech programmes till the exclusive building for the Faculty of Technology is built and made operational.

"The committee authorised the vice-chancellor to decide upon the space and other essential physical infrastructure for initiation of these B.Tech programmes," the report read.

As far as student strength in the first year is concerned, the committee noted that each course will have 120 students. It means a total of 360 students will be admitted. The BTech programmes would be designed in such a manner that there would be a minimum of 50 per cent weightage given to

the major subject area of study with a maximum of 65 per cent weightage. The remaining weightage would be to the minor subject areas of study, the report said.

The students will have multiple exit options in line with the National Education Policy. A student who has completed one year of study and earned the requisite credits would be awarded a certificate, those two years of study and requisite credits would be awarded a diploma, with three years of study along with credits would be awarded an advanced diploma. Students who successfully complete four years would be awarded a BTech degree.

The departments of Computer Engineering, Electronics and Communication Engineering and Electrical Engineering are required to be situated on the North Campus of the university for logistic support and proximity to the majority of the faculties/departments on the campus.

Delhi celebrates world environment day

LG launches makeover of Yamuna Vatika

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena along with Union Minister of State for Culture & External Affairs Meenakshi Lekhi celebrated World Environment Day by launching the extensive overhaul and makeover of the 450-acre Yamuna Vatika.

The project is being undertaken by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) as part of the ongoing Restoration and Rejuvenation scheme of the Yamuna floodplains. The ambitious project had been in limbo for over 7 years, gained momentum after the Delhi High Court ruled in favour of the DDA.

In a bold and unconventional move, Saxena planted 500 Chinar and 500 Cherry Blossom saplings at Yamuna Vatika, which is the latest permanent public green asset being created in Delhi after the successful development of Asita and Baansera.

Located on the Western Bank of the floodplains, stretch-



LG VK Saxena planting a sapling on the occasion of World Environment Day at Gadi Madnu in North East Delhi on Monday
Ranjana Dimri / Pioneer

ing from the Old Railway Bridge to ITO Barrage, Yamuna Vatika spans approximately 450 acres. This endeavor marks the first time that flora species like Chinar and Cherry Blossom have been introduced in Delhi. Recently, Chinar and Cherry Blossom saplings were planted on the Yamuna islands, showcasing rapid growth.

At Yamuna Vatiika, Chinar and Cherry Blossom saplings have been strategically planted over 10 acres of land in a 3-layer circular grid formation, with a large lush green patch in the cen-

ter. These trees, when in full bloom, will provide a majestic view. The saplings were first acclimatized to Delhi's weather conditions in nurseries under controlled atmospheres for a month before being transplanted on the Yamuna floodplains. Speaking on the occasion, the Lt. Governor expressed his belief that the DDA's efforts in restoring the Yamuna floodplains would not only create environment-friendly permanent green recreational assets for the people of Delhi but also help mitigate direct pollution into the Yamuna

River. Saxena highlighted that Yamuna Vatika, like other similar projects, aims to restore the ecological character of the Yamuna floodplains while providing relief from the dense urban landscape of Central and East Delhi.

The project will offer an open recreational space to residents living in residential colonies on the Eastern Banks of the river, including Darvaganj, Kashmere Gate, the Walled City, and commuters from North Delhi.

Yamuna Vatika will feature a 10-acre garden of seasonal flowers, walkways, jogging/cycling tracks, eco-friendly temporary structures for eateries and cafeterias, public utilities, event areas, a bio-retention zone, an adventure zone with a kids' play area, and a wetland with a viewing deck. The existing depressions have been restored and transformed into water bodies/wetlands, with four water bodies covering an area of about 7.40 hectares that can hold approximately 185 million liters of floodwaters. Additionally, approximately 12,600 trees of floodplain-specific species and around 55 lakh riverine grasses are being planted.

We reduced city's pollution by 30%: Kejriwal

Addressing Paryavaran Sammelan, CM says Delhi only city where air quality improved without slowing down of speed of development; BJP rubbishes claim

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday claimed that his Government has succeeded in reducing the city's PM levels by around 30 per cent thus improving the air quality from 'poor' to 'good'. During his address at 'Paryavaran Sammelan', at Thyagaraja Stadium, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Delhi is only city where pollution levels have got better without slowing down the speed of development and developmental activities.

"Compared to 2016, in 2022, there has been a reduction of 30% in PM 10 and PM 2.5 levels in the city over the last 7 years," he said. In his address, the Chief Minister also said that the tree cover percentage (of total land area) in the city has

risen to 23 per cent today from 20 per cent in 2013.

Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, in a statement, dismissed Kejriwal claiming credit for reducing pollution in the national capital. The BJP leader alleged that the condition of Delhi's roads is "very poor", and the deteriorating state of public transportation is contributing the most to pollution.

"The Government has not taken any steps to clean the Yamuna river. If pollution has decreased in Delhi, it is only possible due to the efforts of the Central Government," Bidhuri claimed. "In Delhi, the pace of development has not gone down in the last eight years. Schools, hospitals and flyovers are being constructed," said Kejriwal while addressing



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addresses during the 'Paryavaran Sammelan' on the occasion of World Environment Day, at Thyagaraj Stadium in New Delhi on Monday
Ranjana Dimri / Pioneer

Paryavaran Sammelan, adding work on development has taken place at a swift pace. "But, the pollution level has dipped in this period," he said. Sharing data, he said in 2016, on 26 days, pollution level was 'very bad' when the city was 'akin to a gas chamber' with grey skies and bad air. In 2022, only six such days were there, he said. In 2016, on 109 days, pollution level was 'low with clear sky' and 'very good air outside', but in 2022, the num-

ber of such days were 163, he said. The Chief Minister highlighted the various initiatives undertaken by the Delhi Government to combat pollution, including tree transplantation, the implementation of Piped Natural Gas (PNG) in industries, and the utilisation of Real-Time Source Apportionment Technology. Moreover, the government has identified and is actively working on 13 pollution hotspots in the state. These multifaceted

interventions underscore the Government's unwavering commitment to curbing pollution and safeguarding the health and well-being of Delhi's residents.

Kejriwal, in his address, said it has been 50 years of World Environment Day celebrations. And, in these 50 years, pollution has "increased in every city, village and locality", but it has gone down in Delhi, "as we have worked with 2 crore people of the city and taken a number of measures to mitigate pollution". In an impassioned plea, he called upon the people of Delhi to transform the fight against pollution into a 'jan andolan' (people's movement).

"An area of around 5,000 acres is within cultivation in Delhi and all the farmers here now use this liquid that eliminates the need to burn stubble. Therefore, none of this pollution now originates from Delhi," he said. The event was attended by Delhi Environment and Forests Minister Gopal Rai, local legislators, and other senior officials of the department.

Sisodia denied interim bail in PMLA case

New Delhi: In a fresh setback for AAP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, the Delhi High Court on Monday refused to grant him interim bail in a money laundering case arising from the alleged excise policy scam, to attend to his ailing wife, in view of the "extremely serious" allegations against him and the possibility of "evidence tampering".

In its 8-page order, Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma, however, allowed him to meet his wife in custody for one day at her convenience between 10 am and 5 pm.

Noting that the case concerns "extremely serious allegations" and there is a possibility of evidence tampering if Sisodia, who held several positions in city's AAP government, is released, the judge said, "the court finds it very difficult to persuade itself to release the petitioner on interim bail for 6 weeks." "However, at the same time, this court feels that petitioner should get an opportunity to see and meet his wife. SR

CM dishonoured nat'l anthem: BJP

'Programme was midway when Kejriwal left'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Monday attacked Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, alleging that he "dishonoured" the national anthem by not waiting to take part in its recital at an event.

A Delhi Government official, however, denied the charge saying that the programme was still underway and the Chief Minister had to leave due to some urgent work. The recital of the national anthem was to take place at the end of the event, he added. Kejriwal took part in a World Environment Day event at Thyagaraj Stadium and addressed a gathering on the occasion before leaving. After the event, the Delhi BJP tweeted sharing a video clip of the event. "What kind of AAP's hardcore patriotism is this...He (Arvind Kejriwal) could not wait for the national anthem,"

the BJP tweeted. Some of the BJP leaders, including Delhi BJP chief V Sachdeva and MP Manoj Tiwari, tweeted. Delhi BJP spokesperson Harish Khurana alleged in a tweet, "Breaking News: @ArvindKejriwal dishonoured the national anthem. There is an announcement that everyone should stand up for the national anthem and people also stood up. Suddenly it is announced @CMofDelhi has to go for some important work and he leaves without waiting for the anthem." A Delhi government official, however, said that the announcement for the national anthem recital was done in haste. "As per protocol, the national anthem is always played at the beginning and end of an event. The programme was still underway when the chief minister had to leave. The compere made the announcement about the national anthem in haste, when the CM was leaving. By that time, even Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai had not addressed the gathering," the official added.

Eatry owner, 2 staffers arrested for beating cops capturing acts

New Delhi: A 46-year-old owner of a bar and restaurant, along with his two staffers, was arrested for allegedly assaulting policemen for making videos of the illegal activities being carried out on the premises.

According to police, head constable Naveen received information on Friday that girls were being made to dance obscenely and illicit liquor from Haryana was being served at a bar and restaurant named 'Yaaron Da Adda' near Haryana Maitri Bhawan in Mangolpuri. There upon, two head constables were sent on the spot to do a recce, they said. SR

Min: Timarpur lake being made into tourist spot

New Delhi: The Timarpur lake, being developed as a tourist destination by the Kejriwal government, is soon set to offer people the opportunity to revel in the marvels of nature.

The project would not only facilitate groundwater recharge but also alleviates water-related issues faced by the local population. On the occasion of World Environment Day, Delhi Water Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on Monday visited the Timarpur lake site to assess the progress of the associated works. Bharadwaj also gave directions to the officials to ensure the timely completion of high-quality tasks. He along-

with local residents planted saplings around the lake. Bharadwaj said that the sprawling Timarpur lake, spanning 40 acres, will soon be open for tourists. The plan for constructing the lake is in its final phase, with 90 per cent of the work from the initial phase already completed.

"A Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) being constructed here will channel clean water into the lake. Once the project is completed, it will aid in water storage, groundwater recharge, and contribute to water treatment. Every day, 25 MLD (Million Litres per Day) of water will be treated in this plant. SR



Children with placards during Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's address on the occasion of World Environment Day, at Thyagaraj Stadium in New Delhi on Monday
Ranjana Dimri / Pioneer

Goel: Dog lovers trying to disturb meet, AAP calls it 'anti-woman' face of BJP

New Delhi: The AAP on Monday accused BJP leader Vijay Goel, who has been waging a campaign against the stray dog menace in the city, of hitting a woman during an event, a charge vehemently denied by the former Union Minister.

A purported video clip of the incident went viral on social media in which Goel could be seen being argued with by some people including women. The clip also shows him objecting to a video being shot by someone and trying to snatch the mobile phone.

Goel said that a group of people who claimed to be dog lovers were trying to disturb his meeting to discuss the stray dog menace in the city. "A group of people including some women met me, but they were arguing with me and creating nuisance at the event. They were later removed from the venue of the programme by the police," Goel said. "The video does not show me hitting anyone. Has any complaint been filed against me by anyone for hitting him or her?" Goel asked.

The AAP shared the video on Twitter alleging that the incident showed "anti-woman" face of the BJP. SR

Rajnath, Austin review India-US defence relations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with United States Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin before a bilateral meeting in New Delhi on Monday PTI

India and the US on reviewed the entire gamut of their defence ties here during talks between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin. They also firm up the roadmap for US-India Defence Industrial Cooperation. Austin also held detailed discussions with National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval. It was Austin's second visit to India with the last one in March 2021.

The Defence Industrial Cooperation accords high priority to various projects for the co-development of military platforms and hardware. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to discuss defence related issues including access to cutting edge technology from the US during his talks with President Joe Biden later this month. US Defence Secretary's

visit here came two weeks ahead of Prime Minister Modi's state visit to Washington. During their talks here on Monday, Rajnath and Austin reportedly laid the ground work for some important defence technology related announcements likely to be made after Modi's summit with Biden. In a statement, the defence ministry said both

sides will identify opportunities for the co-development of new technologies and the co-production of existing and new systems besides facilitating increasing collaboration between defence start-up ecosystems of the two countries. Rajnath said after the talks with Austin, the India-US partnership is critical for ensuring a free, open and rules-bound

Indo-Pacific region. He also said India is looking forward to closely work with the US across various domains for capacity building and further consolidating the strategic partnership. Austin arrived in New Delhi on Sunday on a two-day tour.

"Delighted to meet my friend, @SecDef Austin in New Delhi. Our talks revolved around enhancing defence cooperation in several areas including convergence of strategic interests and enhanced security cooperation," Rajnath tweeted. Ahead of the talks at the Manekshaw Centre, Secretary Austin was accorded a guard of honour.

Giving details of the talks, defence ministry officials said the two sides discussed a substantial range of bilateral defence cooperation issues, with particular focus on identifying ways to strengthen industrial cooperation. The two Ministers explored ways of building resilient supply chains.

Towards these objectives, they concluded a roadmap for US-India Defence Industrial Cooperation which shall guide the policy direction for the next few years.

Both sides reviewed the robust and multifaceted bilateral defence cooperation activities and agreed to maintain the momentum of engagement. They welcomed the inaugural dialogues held recently focusing on Defence Artificial Intelligence and Defence Space.

They also discussed the regional security issues given their shared interest in maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Senior officials from Ministry of Defence, including Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane and Secretary, Department of Defence Research and Development and Chairman Defence Research and Development Organisation

(DRDO) Samir V Kamat, participated in the meeting.

In parleys between Doval and Austin, the two sides discussed cooperation in specific niche technologies in maritime, military and aerospace domains to boost capabilities. They also spoke on the greater transfer of technology, co-production and building indigenous capacities in line with India's Make in India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiatives.

Doval emphasised ensuring that countries in different regions - Middle East, South Asia and South East Asia and Indo-Pacific retain their freedom of action in line with their national priorities and are not coerced into poor choices.

The two leaders agreed to focus on trusted sources of supply, resilient supply chains and greater industry-to-industry partnerships. They also emphasised on the strategic approach to global challenges

through whole of government efforts including through people-to-people and societal relations. India and the US are keen to take forward the General Electric's proposal to share technology with India for fighter jet engines and New Delhi's plan to procure 30 MQ-9B armed drones at a cost of over USD 3 billion from US defence major General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. India is looking for manufacturing of jet engines in India under the framework of technology transfer to power its fighter aircraft.

In a major move, President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Modi announced in May last year the US-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) to elevate and expand the strategic technology partnership and defence industrial cooperation between the two countries. The iCET is expected to forge closer linkages between the government,

academia and industry of the two countries in areas such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, 5G and 6G, biotech, space and semiconductors.

The two countries have inked key defence and security pacts over the past few years, including the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016 that allows their militaries to use each other's bases for repair and replenishment of supplies.

India and the US also signed COMCASA (Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement) in 2018 which provides for interoperability between the two militaries and provides for the sale of high-end technology from the US to India. In October 2020, India and the US sealed the BECA (Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement) agreement to further boost bilateral defence ties.

India, Namibia hold dialogue

EAM Jaishankar, Namibian Dy PM Windhoek discuss enhancing ties in pharma, food security, green energy

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ WINDHOEK (NAMIBIA)

India and Namibia on Monday discussed the entire gamut of their bilateral ties during talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Namibian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah in Windhoek.

The two leaders also discussed advancing bilateral ties in energy, green hydrogen, transport and connectivity, digital, pharmaceuticals, food security, science and technology. Jaishankar co-chaired the first Joint Commission of Cooperation between India and Namibia with Nandi-Ndaitwah during which he

underlined that the contemporary cooperation should build on long-standing political goodwill and growing development partnership. "Discussed advancing our ties in energy, green hydrogen, transport & connectivity, digital, pharmaceuticals, food security, science and technology and culture. As also wildlife collaboration and eco-tourism.

Our perspectives (on) regional and global issues are similar and drive our working together in international forums," Jaishankar tweeted. Earlier, Nandi-Ndaitwah held a tete-a-tete with Jaishankar ahead of the delegation-level meeting. Jaishankar arrived here in Namibia's capital on Sunday from Cape Town on a

three-day visit. He was warmly received on his arrival in Windhoek by Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Jenelly Matundu.

He also interacted with the Indian community in Windhoek on Sunday evening. "Shared with them the history of our ties, as well as the new expressions of friendship. Also discussed the progress in India and its impact on Indians living abroad," the minister tweeted.

Addressing them, he said rise of India is unstoppable and the country is taking its place in the world citing India's strong economic growth, its strong relationships abroad and the support of the diaspora worldwide.

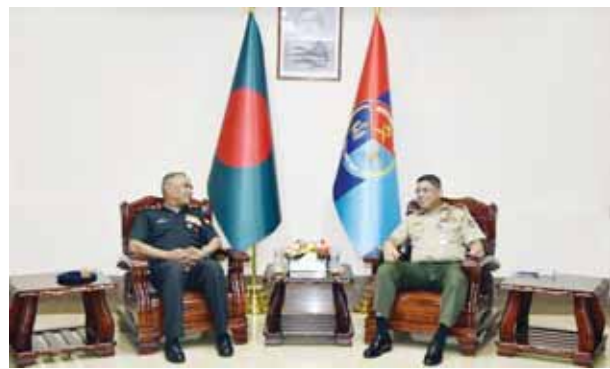
India, B'desh look to deepen military ties as Pande begins talks

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ DHAKA

India and Bangladesh will explore ways to further strengthen their military ties during Army Chief General Manoj Pande's two-day visit to Dhaka beginning Monday. It is his second visit to the neighboring country after assuming charge as the Army chief. He had paid an official visit in July last year.

"During the visit, the Army Chief will be meeting the senior military leadership of Bangladesh where he will discuss avenues for further enhancing Indo-Bangladesh defence relations," the Army said in New Delhi on Monday.

On Tuesday, Pande will review the Passing Out Parade (POP) of officer cadets of the 84th "Long Course" at the Bangladesh Military Academy (BMA) in Chattogram. During the parade, the Army Chief will



Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande interacts with Lieutenant General of Bangladesh Army Waker-Uz-Zaman during a meeting in Dhaka on Monday PTI

be presenting the "Bangladesh India Friendship Trophy" instituted for best foreign cadet from friendly foreign countries of the passing out course from the BMA. The first trophy this year is being awarded to officer cadet Everton of Tanzania. This trophy is in reciprocation to the "Bangladesh Trophy and

Medal" instituted at the Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun in December 2021 for Best foreign cadet passing out course, the Army said in a statement. The Army Chief will be reviewing the POP at IMA, Dehradun on June 10 and present the Bangladesh Medal and the trophy. Other

engagements of the Army Chief include formal interactions with the Chief of Army Staff of the Bangladesh Army and the Principal Staff Officer of the Armed forces division.

The Bangladesh Chief of Army Staff visited India in April this year and reviewed the passing out parade at the Officers Training Academy in Chennai. "Frequent visits by senior military leaders and bilateral cooperation events

such as joint military exercises contribute to enhancing military-to-military relations between both nations," the Army said.

Reports from Dhaka said Pande on Monday met his Bangladeshi counterpart General S M Shafiuddin Ahmed and discussed various aspects of mutual interest and explored ways to further expand bilateral defence and security ties.

ED raids IREO, M3M firms for siphoning off funds, seizes luxury cars

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday said it has carried out search operations at seven locations in Delhi and Gurugram belonging to real estate majors IREO Group and M3M Group for diverting/siphoning off/ misappropriating funds.

During the search operation, the ED seized 17 high end luxury vehicles Ferrari, Lamborghini, Land Rover, Rolls Royce, Bentley and Mercedes Maybach among others having acquisition value of approximately Rs 60 crore, jewellery/ bullion worth Rs 5.75 crore, cash of Rs 15 lakh and various incriminating documents, digital evidences and books of accounts.

The searches were conducted on June 1 under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The ED has been investigating IREO Group for diverting/siphoning off/ misappropriating funds of investors/customers. The investigations were initiated on the basis of multiple FIRs registered against IREO Group.

"The investigations done by ED showed that huge amounts of money running into hundreds of crores were siphoned off through M3M group also," the ED said in a statement. The investigations done by ED showed that in one of the transactions, M3M group received about Rs 400 crore from IREO Group through several shell companies in multiple layers, it said.

"The transactions were shown in books of IREO as payments towards development rights. The land was owned by M3M group and the market value of the land was around Rs 4 crore. M3M Group initially sold the development rights of the said land to five shell companies for a payment of Rs 10 crore. It was claimed that the five companies are unrelated companies. Investigations revealed that the five shell companies were operated by M3M Group," it said.

The five shell companies thereafter immediately sold the development rights of the same land to IREO Group for about Rs 400 crore. After receiving the amount of Rs 400 crore from IREO Group, the five shell companies transferred the said amounts immediately to M3M Group through multiple shell companies and layers, the agency said.

All the shell companies were owned and operated by M3M Group under the directions of its promoters Basant Bansal and Roop Kumar Bansal and his family members.

In this way, IREO and M3M siphoned off about Rs 400 Crore money belonging to investors/ customers and the proceeds of crime remained with M3M Group which was used by the Group for other investments/ paying off liabilities. On the other hand IREO Group did not make any efforts to develop the land and started to write off the investments every year, it said. **PNS**

Indian ship Satpura reaches Indonesia for ASEAN exercise

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As part of Indian Navy's deployment to Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, Indian naval ship Satpura arrived at Makassar, Indonesia on Sunday to participate in the fourth edition of the Multilateral Naval Exercise KOMODO (MNEK-23) scheduled from Monday to Thursday, navy officials said here on Monday.

They said the Indian ship also represented the Indian Navy at the International Fleet Review (IFR) reviewed by President of Indonesia Joko Widodo on Monday.

During the harbour phase of the visit, INS Satpura will participate in the International Maritime Security Symposium, City Parade, cultural programmes and band performances. INS Satpura is also scheduled to participate in a multilateral maritime exercise on June eight. ASEAN is at the core of India's Indo-Pacific policy as enunciated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Indian Navy's regular participation in the MNEK series of exercises is a reaffirmation of India's commitment to "Act East" in its endeavour to ensure "Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)".

INS Satpura, an indigenously designed and built multipurpose stealth frigate, is a part of the Eastern Fleet. The ship is equipped with a versatile array of weapons and sensors and capable of embarking two multi-role helicopters.

The ship is currently mission deployed in South East Asia and participated in the inaugural edition of the ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise (AIME-23) from 02-08 May 23, which witnessed participation by all ASEAN navies.

In a related development, Indian Navy Divers and Marine Commandos are in Maldives for the sixth edition of Exercise Ekatha with Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) from June four to July three. The annual exercise is conducted between the two forces to enhance interoperability in Diving and Special Operations.

Nadda meets ex-Army chief as part of BJP's public connect initiative

New Delhi: BJP president J P Nadda met former Army chief Dalbir Singh Suhag at the latter's Gurugram residence on Monday as part of his party's month-long public connect initiative to mark nine years of the Narendra Modi government.

Nadda gave to General (retired) Suhag a booklet highlighting the achievements of the Modi government and spoke to him on various aspects of the nine-year-rule of the party at the Centre, according to a statement from the BJP.

The BJP has launched a series of public outreach exercises from May 30 and it will last till June 30. Holding rallies and interactions with various segments of society is a part of the programme which the party has initiated as part of celebrating the nine-years of the Modi government at the centre. The party has asked all its leaders to highlight the achievements of the Prime Minister's various flagship schemes among the people and the beneficiaries across the states.

Modi praises Yogi for UP's development

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday lauded Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for his "great leadership" to Uttar Pradesh and for "ensuring all-round development" in the State.

Yogi Adityanath who has become the only Chief Minister in last 37-years to retain power in the state i was greeted by the Prime Minister on his 51st birth day. UP is central to the Lok Sabha poll success of any political party as 80 members of the lower house are elected from the state.

In 2019 Lok Sabha poll, the BJP won 62 out of the 80 seats from the most populous state in the country. In the upcoming Lok Sabha polls 2024 which are barely 10-11 months away, UP again would be a key state for the ruling party if it were to retain a majority in the Lok Sabha. "Birthdays greetings to Uttar Pradesh's dynamic



CM Yogi Adityanath Ji. Over the last 6 years, he has provided great leadership to the state and ensured all-round progress. On key parameters, UP's development has been remarkable. Praying for his long and healthy life," said the Prime Minister in a tweet.

Adityanath has been the state's chief minister since 2017 and has risen to become one of the most prominent BJP leaders, more so after the party returned to power in the politically crucial state in 2022 with a big win.

The UP CM is seen by many in the saffron family as one of the leaders of the BJP who could be projected by the party in the post-Modi era.

Paper leak case: ED conducts raids in Raj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday conducted searches at multiple locations in Rajasthan in connection with a money laundering investigation into an alleged examination paper leak case for recruitment of teachers in the State.

Officials said premises of the suspects in State capital Jaipur, Barmer district and some cities are being covered as part of the action under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The State has witnessed few instances where it was alleged that examination question papers for recruitment of teachers were leaked to aspirants, including in 2021 during the hiring of teachers by the State education board and during last year in the entrance conducted by Rajasthan Public Service Commission (RPSC).

Video capsule that can navigate stomach

US researchers' capsule will help photograph potential stomach problems

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a first-of-its-kind, US researchers have developed a miniature video capsule that can navigate all regions of the stomach, i.e. in three-dimensions to visualize and photograph potential problem areas through external magnet and hand-held video game style joysticks.

The study conducted on 40 patients is the first to test magnetically controlled capsule endoscopy in the United States. Though presently indigestible video capsule endoscopes have been around for many years, the capsules have been limited by the fact that they could not be controlled by physicians. They moved passively, driven only by

gravity and the natural movement of the body. But the new technology based on video capsule comes closer to the capabilities of a traditional tube-based endoscopy.

"A traditional endoscopy is an invasive procedure for patients, not to mention it is costly due to the need for anesthesia and time off work," Andrew Meltzer, a professor of Emergency Medicine at the GW School of Medicine & Health Sciences, said. "If larger studies can prove this method is sufficiently sensitive to detect high-risk lesions, magnetically controlled capsules could be used as a quick and easy way to screen for health problems in the upper GI tract such as

ulcers or stomach cancer." More than 7 million traditional endoscopies of the stomach and upper part of the intestine are performed every year in the United States to help doctors investigate and treat stomach pain, nausea, bleeding and other symptoms of disease, including cancer. Despite the benefits of traditional endoscopies, studies suggest some patients have trouble accessing the procedure.

In fact, Meltzer got interested in the magnetically controlled capsule endoscopy after seeing patients in the emergency room with stomach pain or suspected upper GI bleeding who faced barriers to getting a traditional endoscopy as an out-

patient. Yet, Meltzer cautions that the study is a pilot and a much bigger trial with more patients must be conducted to make sure the method does not miss important lesions and can be used in place of an endoscopy. A major limitation of the capsule includes the inability to perform biopsies of lesions that are detected.

The study, "Magnetically Controlled Capsule for Assessment of the Gastric Mucosa in Symptomatic Patients (MAGNET): A Prospective, Single-Arm, Single-Center, Comparative Study," was published in iGIE, the open-access, online journal of American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy.

Bengal Mango Mela in Delhi kicks off

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

If you fancy GI tag mangoes such as "Malda Lakshmanbhog", "Malda Fajli" and "Malda Khirsapati" or "Malda Himsagar" varieties, then it's time to head towards 9th Bengal Mango Mela at Janpath's Handloom Haat which kicked off here on Monday.

The 15-day festival has brought together a huge quantity of around 40,000kgs of diverse range of delicious juicy mangoes such as Alphonso, Sindhura, Totapuri, Hapus, Ratnagiri, Chausa, Rasputri, Pairi, Himsagar, Neelam, Malkova, Malda, Langra, Kesar, Badami, etc, particularly from six different district of the state namely Malda, Murshidabad, Nadia, Hooghly, North 24 Parganas and Bankura. Its not only the GI tag mangoes will be available for mango lovers. The fest also showcases the States handicrafts and handlooms, many of which are GI tags.

The Mela was inaugurated by Dr Subrata Gupta, additional Chief Secretary,



Department of Food Processing Industries and Horticulture, Ujjaini Dutta, Resident Commissioner of West Bengal and Jayanta Kumar Aikat, Director, Department of Food Processing Industries and Horticulture.

Gupta shared that in comparison to last year, this time more stalls are participating and many new initiatives are being showcased. Gupta also said that for the first time five tribal groups of 10 tribal artisans are also participating at the event which on the first day itself saw a sizable

number of footfalls. Among GI tags handicrafts and handlooms that will be available for sale will be Bankura Panchmura Terracotta, Bengal Dokra, Bengal Patachitra, Purulia Chhau Mask, Wooden mask of Kushmandi, Madurkathi among a vast range of attractive products.

The event will also include a cultural extravaganza for the audience to be mesmerised in the evenings. Last but not least, the event will let people indulge their taste buds with "Magical Mango" delights such as "Mango Mutton with Luchi", "Mango Halwa", "Mango Pulao", "Mango Souffle", "Mango Fish Fry", "Mango Lassi", "Mango Pastry" and many more delicacies.

Uzzal Saha, President of Malda Mango Merchants' Association said that this year the State has seen record mango production and arrangements have been made to bring mangoes every day via trains to ensure buyers at the event get the fresh varieties of fruit. He said that West Bengal's mangoes have a huge market in Europe and Gulf countries.

Shinde Sena, BJP to fight all polls jointly

Announcement made after Maha CM, Fadnavis met Shah in Delhi



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis during a meeting, in New Delhi PTI

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI
The two ruling alliance partners in Maharashtra - Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the BJP - have decided to contest all the forthcoming elections i.e. the Lok Sabha, State Assembly and local body polls, all together on the development plank.
Announcing this after he and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis met Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah in New Delhi, Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena president Eknath Shinde said on Monday that "our alliance for the development of Maharashtra is strong" and that his party and the BJP had taken several development decisions and implemented them during the last eleven months.
In a detailed tweet put out on his personal handle, Shinde said: "Yesterday, Sunday night,

the Deputy Chief Minister @Dev_Fadnavis and I met the Union Home and Cooperation Minister @AmitShah in Delhi. We discussed various matters related to agriculture, cooperative department"
"In the state, work is going on in various fields such as farmers and women empowerment and many stalled projects have been completed. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always been guiding us on various projects in the state. We took this appointment with Shah as we always get guidance from him," Shinde said.
"It was also decided in this meeting that Shiv Sena and BJP will jointly contest all upcoming elections in the State (including elections to Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha, local bodies)," he said.
"Our alliance for the development of Maharashtra is strong and since the last 11 months we have taken various develop-

ment decisions and implemented them, clearing stalled projects," Shinde said.
"In the future, we will contest elections together and win with a majority to make Maharashtra the number one state in the country in all fields, to continue the race of development," the chief minister said. The meeting between Shinde-Fadnavis and Shah came three weeks ahead of the first anniversary of the Shinde-Fadnavis government in Maharashtra.
It may be recalled that Shinde, then a senior Shiv Sena leader, had rebelled against the then chief minister and Sena president Uddhav Thackeray, walked out of the party along with 40-odd MLAs leading to the collapse of the government Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), a grand alliance comprising Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress.
Shinde later teamed up with the then Opposition BJP to

form a new government in the state. Shinde and Fadnavis were sworn as the Maharashtra chief minister and deputy chief minister respectively on June 30, 2022.
Shinde's announcement about his party and the BJP contesting all the future polls as an alliance comes on the heels of a similar announcement made by the three constituents of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) - Shiv Sena, NCO and Congress - last month.
After a joint meeting held among them at NCP chief Sharad Pawar's south Mumbai residence "Silver Oak" on May 14, the leaders of the three MVA constituents had announced that they would contest the forthcoming Lok Sabha and Assembly as an alliance. They had also decided to initiate seat-sharing talks among them in the coming weeks.

Maha CM, Deputy CM puppets in hands of their masters in Delhi: Nana



TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Slamming Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis for their "over-dependence" on the "bosses in Delhi", Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole said that the two leaders "are puppets in the hands of their masters in the national Capital" and that "they always have their one foot in Delhi".
On a day when Shinde announced after he and Fadnavis met Union Home Minister Amit Shah that the Shiv Sena headed by him and the BJP would contest all future polls in Maharashtra together, Patole said that the two ruling alliance leaders were working "only at the behest of their Delhi bosses". Coming down heavily on the frequent visits of Shinde and Fadnavis to Delhi, Patole said: "They (Shinde and Fadnavis) cannot take any decision without the permission of their Delhi bosses. They are the puppets at the hands of their masters in Delhi and they always have one foot in Delhi".
Talking to media persons here, Patole said that Shinde had himself declared at a function in Aurangabad that "he is an agent of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Shah."

"Now there is talk that he has gone to Delhi for Cabinet expansion because he cannot take a decision without asking Delhi. Many departments have no Ministers for a year. See the irony, one Minister is in charge of six or seven departments and six districts have only one guardian Minister. All this has brought the administration of the State to a standstill," Patole said. "Ministers cannot do justice to any department. The people are suffering because of the lack of administration in the State. Several of the issues of the public continue to be pending but the Shinde-Fadnavis Government is not worried about it," he said.
"Today there is severe shortage of water in many parts of the State, farmers are desperate, farmers have not yet received help for the damage caused by unseasonal rain and hailstorm. The time has come for the farmers to throw their produce on the road, cotton is still lying in the farmer's house," Patole said. "But the Shinde-Fadnavis Government doesn't care about all these issues. It is only concerned with turning everything into an event. The people of the State are fed up with this Government and it will be sent back in the next elections," the State Congress president said.

ANTI-COW SLAUGHTER LAW IN K'TAKA BJP protests as Cong plans to revisit law



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The battle-line may have been drawn in Karnataka between the BJP and the Congress on the issue of the anti-cow slaughter law passed by the BS Yediyurappa-led Government in 2021 with the incumbent Congress Government now asserting that it would revisit the law as the BJP workers on Monday took to the streets to protest the contemplated move.
Commenting on the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Act, which is also known as the anti-cow slaughter law, Karnataka Animal Husbandry Minister K Venkatesh said in Mysuru that the Congress Government would "revisit the law."
Karnataka Animal Husbandry Minister also said, "If buffaloes can be slaughtered, why not cows?"
BJP workers on Monday took to streets in Bengaluru, Chikballapura, Mysuru, Davangere and other parts of the State against the Congress Government's likely move to reverse that anti-cow slaughter ban in the State.
In Mysuru, the BJP workers raised slogans against the Congress Government for its decision to revisit the anti-cow slaughter law. They also held placards which read, "BJP demands the Congress Government to continue the anti-cow slaughter law."
The Karnataka Minister's argument was that the previous BJP Government had promulgated the law, which allowed slaughter of buffaloes.
Responding to a question on the difficulties faced by farmers in managing aged cows, the Minister shared his own example where he had to get an earth-

mover to bury his dead cow.
Around 20 out of 28 States in India had various laws regulating the act of slaughtered cow, prohibiting the slaughter or sale of cows.
Goa, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Pondicherry, Kerala, Arunachal and the other seven North-Eastern States and West Bengal are the regions where there are no restrictions on cow slaughter. Amid uproarious scenes with Opposition members tearing copies of the Bill and protesting in the Well of the House, the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill, 2020, was passed by voice vote in February 2021 in the Legislative Council when the BJP was led by the then Chief Minister Yediyurappa.
This was even as the Opposition Congress and the Janata Dal (S), whose combined strength formed a majority in the House, demanded a division of vote in the state assembly.
The Congress move to 'revisit' anti-cow slaughter act could flare-up political debate ahead of the Lok Sabha polls which are barely 10-11 months away.
Several states in the country including Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, have very stringent anti-cow slaughter laws in place with the slaughter of cow, bull and bullocks is completely prohibited.

Abhishek's wife stopped from boarding Dubai flight

Mamata slams BJP Govt for getting ED to stop Rujira Narula from flying to Dubai to see her indisposed mother

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday lashed out at the BJP Government for getting the Enforcement Directorate to stop her niece-in-law Rujira Banerjee from flying to Dubai where she was reportedly going to see her indisposed mother.
"This is inhuman to stop a woman from going to see her indisposed mother in a foreign country... Rujira is a Punjabi girl who has never been concerned with politics... but still she is being harassed because of political reasons," Banerjee said adding the ED had stopped her from going abroad in utter violation of a Supreme Court order which only required her to inform the investigating officials before any foreign trip.
"She was stopped at the immigration, citing a lookout notice issued by the ED in a case. There is a court order, which has clearly said that there is no bar on her travelling abroad," her lawyers said adding, "we are mulling legal options."
Rujira Narula Banerjee is the wife of the Chief Minister's nephew and Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee.
"Though there was a Supreme Court order permitting her to go abroad after informing the ED they have stopped her from going to see her mother today," the Chief Minister said adding "a Government



which cannot prevent railway accidents... a Government which cannot prevent the rally of the dead is harassing its citizens."
TMC general secretary Kunal Ghosh, too, attacked the BJP Government for victimizing the Opposition leaders. "Having failed to counter Abhishek Banerjee politically, having failed to win elections in Bengal the BJP is using the ED and the CBI to victimise him... and the best way of doing so is to victimise his family members... this is a pure act of cowardice."
Rujira, who had earlier been questioned by the ED and CBI in the multi-crore coal scam, was on Monday morning flying off to Dubai, when she was stopped by the immigration officials from boarding the flight.
In a curious development Rujira was

served with a notice of appearance by the ED soon after she was prevented from boarding the aircraft at NSI Airport in Kolkata. She has been asked to appear before the ED officials on June 8, sources said.
Meanwhile, in a related development the ED on Monday served a notice to Bengal minister Maloy Ghatak asking him to appear in its Delhi office, sources said. Ghatak had earlier evaded two appearances saying his health would not permit him to move to Delhi. He had even moved the Supreme Court seeking a respite from appearance in Delhi.
However the Apex Court directed the ED to give him 15-days' notice before appearance. Accordingly Ghatak has been asked to appear at the ED office in Delhi on June 19.
Ghatak had already been quizzed twice by the central agency which had on an earlier occasion raided his residence and offices in Kolkata.
Reacting to the ED summons, senior BJP leader Rahul Sinha said, "time has come for all the TMC leaders involved in all kinds of scams to go behind the bars... Maloy Ghatak is perhaps next in the line after Partha Chatterjee, Manik Bhattacharya, and other TMC leaders who are presently in jail... he will have to disclose the facts regarding who were the real beneficiaries in the coal scam" which amounts to Rs 8,000 crore.

Manohar Joshi shifted out of ICU

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Nearly a fortnight after he was admitted to PD Hinduja Hospital here following a brain haemorrhage former Chief Minister and ex-Lok Sabha Speaker Manohar Joshi was shifted out of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the hospital and the doctors attending on him described his condition as "stable".
Eight-six-year-old Joshi was on the night of May 22 rushed to the Hinduja Hospital at Mahim in central Mumbai in a "semi-coma" State after he developed complications from a brain tumour. "He has been shifted out of the ICU and his health is currently stable. However, he remains semiconscious. Our team of experts continues to closely monitor his health," the hospital said in a health bulletin issued here on Monday.
Joshi, who has not been active in politics for several years now, became the first Chief Minister of the Shiv Sena in 1995 when his party came to power in alliance with the BJP and he remained in the post for the next four years. He was also the Speaker of Lok Sabha from 2002 to 2004 during the AB Vajpayee Government at the Centre.

Only heads of parties should be at Opp meet, says Nitish

PTI ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Monday said that he was insistent upon "heads" of respective parties attending the Opposition meet, which was scheduled on June 12, but has been postponed.
Talking to reporters on the sidelines of a function here, the JD(U) supreme leader said a new date for the much-talked-about meeting will be announced after consultation with all parties.
"We had to put off the June 12 meeting after the Congress and another party conveyed to me that they found the date inconvenient. I have, therefore, decided to postpone the meet and asked the Congress to suggest a new date after consultation with other parties.
"But I have made one thing very clear. All parties which agree to attend the meeting, must be represented by their respective heads," Kumar said. If any party insisted that it be represented by someone else, that would not be acceptable, he said.
"For example, there was an impression that the Congress may send someone else other than its president. This was something we could not accept," added Kumar, who has, since his exit from the NDA last year, embarked on a drive to bring together all parties opposed to the BJP ahead of the Lok Sabha polls next year.
Last week, State Congress president Akhilesh Prasad Singh had said that his party was planning to send "one Chief Minister and another senior leader" for the meeting.
This had evoked taunts from the BJP, now in Opposition in Bihar, which claimed neither Rahul Gandhi, who is abroad, nor Mallikarjun Kharge, the Congress president, was assigning much importance to the initiative of Nitish Kumar,



despite being his ally in the State. The idea of a meeting of Opposition parties in Patna was first mooted by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at a Press conference she addressed jointly with Kumar in April.
Accompanied by his deputy Tejashwi Yadav, Kumar had visited Kolkata to meet the TMC chief who exhorted him to carry forward the legacy of Jayaprakash Narayan, referring to the socialist leader's revolt against the Indira Gandhi Government before and during the Emergency.
Kumar, who had served as the Railway Minister in the Government headed by late Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was also asked about the Balasore train crash which has killed close to 300 people.
"It is tragic and though I do not like to comment much on such mishaps, I cannot help saying that this Government's moves like scrapping a separate rail budget betray its skewed priorities," said Kumar, who has for long been demanding that the system of a separate rail budget be restored. "Railways are the most popular means of transport in the country. The masses use it. But I wonder whether this Government wants to make the railways a relic of the past, worthy of being kept in museums," remarked Kumar.
He also spoke at length about his resignation as Railway Minister upon a major train accident in Gaisal, West Bengal, in 1999, which "respected Vajpayee ji was not ready to accept, but relented only after I remained adamant".
The resignation was tendered by Kumar in the thick of Lok Sabha elections and he recalled with satisfaction that when Vajpayee formed a new Government and he was back as Railway Minister "all my recommendations with regard to modernisation were accepted and implemented".

Gasps, stunned silence as Vande Bharat Exp crosses train crash site in Balasore

PTI ■ BALASORE

Some passengers gasped. Others muttered "Jagannath Jagannath". Most were too stunned to say anything as everyone gazed out of the windows. The Vande Bharat Express had slowed down to a crawl as it passed by the site of Friday night's train crash near Bahanga Bazar station, providing passengers a close up glimpse of the evidence of the horror - a few upturned coaches, a crane and workers cleaning up the site. The Howrah-Puri Vande Bharat on Monday was the first passenger train to pass through the area in day time after authorities opened the tracks following the accident, which killed 275 people and injured more than 1,200.
"Ish ...," said Kanika Chaudhury, 56, using the Bengali expression to convey shock, adding "dekhle koshto hoy (Its painful to watch)". The Railway authorities had on Sunday informed passengers

through a group SMS that the train would leave on time.
The train left on time from Howrah station at 6.10 AM but no one was sure of the route it would take as news on the state of the tracks which had broken up because of the accident which claimed 275 lives was unknown.
Passengers were heard discussing the route it might take, especially as the display board in the compartment showed it was travelling at a speed of over 110 km per hour.
The majority of the passengers were bound for Puri, the sea side pilgrim town and a favourite go-to-destination for tourists in eastern India.
However, after the train reached Kharagpur the announcements that the next station would be Baleswar made the passengers rush to the large windows of the train, ready with their mobile phones. The train's speed was still between 110 km and 122 km.
The train reached Kantapara station, a few km ahead of



Bahanaga Bazar and stopped for a brief time.
"Just four minutes away," said Bimal Saha, a young man in hushed tones after checking on the Google map on his phone. The speed as the train crawled forward was now down to 20 to 25 kmph and all eyes were fixed at the scene that unfolded outside.
When the train crossed the first mangled coach lying next to the up track at around 9.25 AM, on which Coromondal Express travelled that fateful night, not one man or woman spoke. Mobile cameras were switched on by almost all of them.
The mangled compartments lying next to the up railway line presented an apocalyptic sight for about the next 25 minutes. The Railway authorities have screened off the area with green cloth but the eyes sought out the twisted and mangled steel.
The sight was bizarre as most of them lay capsized, one after another, with their heavy steel underbelly and the wheels protruding into the sky. Almost all gasped, as the enormity of the accident seeped in. Though every passenger had read about its aftermath on their television sets, the actual dimensions sunk in as the vista unfolded.
The Coromondal Express had crashed into a stationary goods train, derailing most of its coaches at 7 PM on June 2. A few coaches of the Coromondal toppled over the last few coaches of the Bengaluru-Howrah Express which was passing by at the same time in the opposite direction, turning it into a devastating triple train crash.
There were a large number of policemen at the site and members of the electronic media were visible in sizeable numbers. A number of them were even seen taking shots of the passing Vande Bharat Express. There were also a large number of

laborers, many of whom who had their noses covered to perhaps keep out the stench.
A few capsized compartments could also be seen lying next to the down track on which the ill-fated Bangalore-Howrah-Yashwantpur Express was travelling Friday evening.
As the train moved through the spot at slow speed, there was no jerk at all. "Undoubtedly, the railway engineers have done a great job. But wish our systems are more advanced to prevent any collision," said Kanika Chaudhury. "So many lives lost, so many families affected," sighed her daughter Soumika, a graphic designer.
No other train was seen at the spot. Just two to three trains were seen between Howrah and Kharagpur, one being the Baghajatin Express from Bhadrak to Howrah. Other trains to Puri like Shree Jagannath Express, Sealdah-Puri Duranto Express and Howrah-Puri Express on Monday have been canceled.

Commissioner of Railway Safety records statements of injured drivers

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) on Monday recorded the statements of injured engine driver Gunanidhi Mohanty and his assistant Hajari Behera, who are undergoing treatment at AIIMS Bhubaneswar, officials said. Both were rescued from the Shalimar-Chennai Central Coromondal Express that derailed near Bahanaga Bazar Station on June 2 that had claimed 275 lives and left around 1,200 injured.
"Both the drivers were stable. While Mohanty was taken out of the ICU on Monday, Behera is awaiting a head surgery," South Eastern Railway (SER) Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Aditya Choudhury said. Families of both the dri-

vers have appealed to all for privacy and allow them to recover physically and mentally. They claimed that the drivers could not be blamed for the accident as they operated the locomotive according to rules. Earlier, the Railway Ministry had apparently given clean chit to both of them.
The Commissioner Railway Safety, SER Circle, which began its inquiry into the accident on Monday, has recorded the statements of both of them, Choudhury said.
Sources said that an FIR was registered at the Government Railway Police Station (GRPS), Balasore, under sections of the Railway Act on June 3. On Sunday, the Railway Board had recommended a CBI probe into the Balasore train accident.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A war no one wins

As both sides in Ukraine-Russia war gear up for the summer assault, chances are both sides would be net losers

This summer the Ukraine war is likely to reach a decisive phase with both sides digging their heels and preparing for the final assault. With the assured support of 40 countries Ukraine must be brimming with confidence but Russia with its prowess is no pushover either. The moot question is no matter who wins or loses at the end of the day one of the bloodiest wars in recent times will take a heavy toll on both sides. As both sides prepare for the summer offensives hope to end it with both sides focused on different objectives. By the end, both sides will be exhausted, short of ammunition, and in dire need of a break - the conditions for negotiation. The West has committed to supporting Ukraine's battle against the Russian invasion, but what can Ukraine realistically expect to achieve with its forthcoming offensive? The conflict in Ukraine has once again escalated, with renewed hostilities shaking the region and raising concerns across the international community. The war that erupted in 2014 following Russia's annexation of Crimea and the subsequent separatist movements in eastern Ukraine has since claimed thousands of lives and displaced numerous civilians. Recent developments in the Ukraine war have been deeply troubling. Violent clashes between Ukrainian government forces and pro-Russian separatists have intensified, resulting in a mounting death toll and renewed suffering for the civilian population.



The use of heavy weaponry and reports of targeted attacks on residential areas have compounded the humanitarian crisis. In addition to the direct clashes on the ground, there are growing concerns about the involvement of external actors. Reports of Russian military buildup near the Ukrainian border and alleged support for separatist forces have fueled fears of a broader escalation of the conflict. Diplomatic efforts, while ongoing, have not yet yielded significant breakthroughs to bring about a sustainable ceasefire. The immediate concern is the worsening humanitarian crisis. Civilians caught in the crossfire face immense challenges. The civilian casualties are a cause of concern so is the lack of access to basic necessities, healthcare, and education. A diplomatic resolution remains the most desirable outcome to end the Ukraine war. Diplomatic channels should be revitalised with a renewed commitment from all involved parties. International mediators must facilitate dialogue and negotiate a peaceful settlement that respects Ukraine's territorial integrity without humiliating Russia. We know how humiliating Germany after First World War led to the rise of Hitler and resulted in Second World War. The international community must respond to the crisis. Stronger diplomatic pressure on Russia and increased support for Ukraine can help to de-escalate the situation. Mediators, such as the United Nations and European Union, and must play a more proactive role in finding a solution. The war has taken a heavy toll of the world economy by disrupting supply chains causing misery around the world

port for separatist forces have fueled fears of a broader escalation of the conflict. Diplomatic efforts, while ongoing, have not yet yielded significant breakthroughs to bring about a sustainable ceasefire. The immediate concern is the worsening humanitarian crisis. Civilians caught in the crossfire face immense challenges. The civilian casualties are a cause of concern so is the lack of access to basic necessities, healthcare, and education. A diplomatic resolution remains the most desirable outcome to end the Ukraine war. Diplomatic channels should be revitalised with a renewed commitment from all involved parties. International mediators must facilitate dialogue and negotiate a peaceful settlement that respects Ukraine's territorial integrity without humiliating Russia. We know how humiliating Germany after First World War led to the rise of Hitler and resulted in Second World War. The international community must respond to the crisis. Stronger diplomatic pressure on Russia and increased support for Ukraine can help to de-escalate the situation. Mediators, such as the United Nations and European Union, and must play a more proactive role in finding a solution. The war has taken a heavy toll of the world economy by disrupting supply chains causing misery around the world

PICTALK



Artists participate in an awareness rally on the occasion of World Environment Day, in Kolkata

Darwin beyond western pedagogy

Pedagogy was at the core of education in ancient India. Gurukulas believed that nothing can be taught it must be explored



RAGHAVENDRA P. TIWARI

There is an intelligentsia in our country that opposes every reform that the present dispensation is implementing for the good of the masses. These people create euphoria even on small pretexts and adamantly refuse to see the logic behind the change. A recent case in point is the shredding of the course contents by the NCERT from the Class-X syllabus. This was with a view to making course contents 'light but tight' especially owing to learning loss in the aftermath of Corona pandemic and the resultant trauma that the students underwent. Apart from making noises on rationalising the history syllabus, the latest rhetoric by 1800 scientists, science teachers and educators is on the dropping of 'Charles Darwin's Theory of Biological Evolution' from the science syllabus in Class X curriculum of the CBSE by the NCERT. They demanded that the theory of Darwinian evolution should be restored.

In fact, the rationalization of contents was carried out last year by a committee of experts based on learning outcomes, difficulty level, the relevance of topics, content overlapping horizontally and vertically, and the capacity of learners for self-learning. Accordingly, from the textbook of Class X, Chapter-9 on 'Heredity and Evolution' has been replaced with 'Heredity'. Other dropped chapters include the origin of life on earth, molecular phylogeny, evolution, tracing evolutionary relationships and human evolution. However, the fact is that Darwin's Theory of Biological Evolution and the Periodic Table are prominently taught in Class-XII and Class-XI respectively.

Though the efficacy of these dropped chapters is a matter of another debate, these topics are considered to be advanced ones having higher difficulty levels and hence are important for those who wish to pursue a career in biological sciences. Hence, it is appropriate that these concepts are introduced to Class-XII learners as building blocks when their cognitive domains are better developed to critically appreciate such advanced topics. In undergraduate courses, these concepts can be



taught on a higher pedestal. In fact, now we must shift the focus of learners away from content and instruction, and lay emphasis on cognitive processes and higher-order thinking skills. The capacity of learners and their state of mind should be an important consideration while selecting learning modules. Moreover, all available contents cannot be taught as a part of the syllabus. Other important concepts and theories can be introduced by the teachers and scientists beyond the class-room and beyond syllabus activities for imparting wholesome learning as was commendably accomplished by the late Prof. Yashpal and Dr Abdul Kalam.

Apart from several other reforms stipulated in NEP-2020, one of the far-reaching consequences is an emphasis on "How to learn" instead of "What to learn". This phrase actually symbolises a 'new age learning' and will help inculcate life-long learning adaptation traits. Moreover, new-age learners are living in the era of Education 4.0. This version of education is outcome-based and is necessary for transforming the current content-driven education system to a learner-centric one, and ensuring that learners develop knowledge, wisdom and skills, essential to flourish in today's



THERE MUST BE AN INHERENT, BURNING, AND PERPETUAL DESIRE TO BE CURIOUS. AMAATSARYA MEANS THAT A STUDENT SHOULD BE EAGER TO GAIN KNOWLEDGE FROM THE TEACHER

competitive world. Education 4.0 emphasises suitable pedagogical pathways such as flip-learning and the use of virtual reality tools for transforming passive learning environment into active one; learning at home or outside institutions, while skill development in the institutions; self-directed, collaborative, immersive and experiential learning ecosystem where lesson plans become creativity plans; and offering freedom to learners to study preferred courses and contents. All these find a special place in NEP 2020.

The argument that scientific temper and critical thinking cannot be developed without teaching Charles Darwin's "Theory of Biological Evolution", in my opinion, does not hold much ground. Inculcating scientific mindset and critical thinking is not content-driven but pedagogy and evaluation based. Pedagogy was at the core of education in ancient India. Gurukulas believed that nothing can be taught. Therefore, gurus were facilitators and did not actually train the minds of the shishyas, but only showed them how to perfect their instruments of learning. One of the Shrutis states that quality learning happens in four quarters: one-fourth from the teacher, one-fourth from the intelli-

gence of learners, one-fourth from discussion with peers, and one-fourth with time i.e., experience gained from putting theory into practice.

There must be an inherent, burning, and perpetual desire to be curious. Amaatsarya means that a student should be eager to gain knowledge from the teacher. Shraavanadar implies that students should be attentive, punctual, and inquisitive, and ensure the timely completion of the assigned tasks. Therefore, the moot question instead should be 'How to integrate ancient traditions of the known and the knowing with the current system to make it relevant for 21st Century learners.'

In essence, the decision of the NCERT to rationalise and downsize the course contents from the syllabi of Class-XI and XII is aimed at distressing the students from the mental agony that they underwent during Corona pandemic or likely to undergo in the event of a future pandemic and thereby to ensure sound mental health for them. Opposition to this exercise may actually mean forcing students to be under pressure and remain stressed.

(The writer is Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda, Punjab. Views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BALASORE TRAGEDY

Sir — With the death toll now at more than 400 and over 1,200 injured, the tragic accident in Balasore, eastern Odisha has once again focused attention on the issue of railway safety in India. The crash was one of the country's deadliest train accidents in decades and occurred at a time when the government has been trying to make rail travel a pleasurable, and, more importantly, a safe experience.

The experts say crumbling infrastructure has caused numerous train accidents, raising questions about the money spent on train maintenance and track renewal. The report, submitted to parliament in December last year, said that a major factor in these accidents was the lack of maintenance on railway tracks. Funds for track renewal had declined, the report said, and, in many cases, were not being fully utilized. Fires, accidents at unmanned level crossings, and collisions were the other causes of accidents the report cited. What is more, concerns have been flagged on the acute shortage of manpower, especially in track safety, with many posts lying vacant in departments across the network. A lot more still needs to be done to upgrade the 65,000 kilometres of tracks and install modern signalling equipment on the network. For now, the train accident in eastern Odisha is a stark reminder of the obstacles facing the government in delivering on its promise to make the railways more efficient, and safer.

Bagwan Thadani | Mumbai

WRESTLERS DESERVE A BETTER DEAL

Sir — The protesting wrestlers deserve better treatment from the authorities as their cause is genuine. They are agitating in the capital city seeking justice according to the law of the land and to see that law takes its course. The serious allegations of sexual harassment against a powerful authority person, charged by those who won medals and laurels at the international level for the country should not go unattended by the law of the land. The law-enforcing machinery should act in this case in the

World environment day



World Environment Day (WED) is a global event that celebrates and encourages action on the most pressing environmental issues. It is held annually on 5 June and has been led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) since 1973. The theme for 2023 is "Beat Plastic Pollution", which aims to raise awareness and mobilise solutions to tackle the problem of plastic waste in lakes, rivers, seas and land.

Plastic pollution is one of the biggest threats to our planet and its biodiversity. According to UNEP, more than 400 million tonnes of plastic is produced every year worldwide, half of which is designed to be used only once. Of that, less than 10 per cent is recycled and an estimated 19-23 million tonnes end up in aquatic ecosystems

same line and pace, if not fast, as it's mandated in the rule book. The undue delay in response cannot bring glory to the Government.

Dr DVG. Sankararao | Vizianagaram

MAKE CITIES SAFE

Sir — Our planet Earth is unique. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it is the only planet to support life. A balanced environment on Earth is what makes the survival of species possible. Modern man has made great developments in the fields of science and technology. Today, he is all ready to settle in a living community on Mars. So when even the planets of our solar system have not been able to escape the grasp of man's advancing technology, can the environment on our planet remain

untouched? No. All the scientific advancement made by man has come at the cost of the degradation of our environment. The main cause of the degradation of the environment is pollution. Today, industries are part of a country's economy. As a result, factories have been set up everywhere around the globe. The toxic substances released by these factories pollute the air and contaminate the water. The polluted air is responsible for several hazardous diseases in humans and animals. Chemical factories release harmful gas particles and fatal lead components, in small amounts.

Shanthi Ramanathan | Ghaziabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The unresolved issues of Indian carbon sink

Dedicating forests for sequestration role can negatively affect other forest-related benefits and life of forest dwellers

India has committed, as the Nationally Determined Contribution declared under Paris Agreement (2015), to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030. Preparation of a roadmap towards achievement of this target warrants, as a prerequisite, a simultaneous consideration of status of forests and tree resources, their socio-economic linkages, and accrual of carbon as well as non-carbon benefits from them.

The status of forests indicated in the ISFR needs to be examined with reference to parameters that are relevant from the point of view of the services they provide. While the plantations outside recorded forests have gone up in the country, hill districts have lost 902 sq. kms of forest cover indicating damage to watersheds and an impending risk to water security and agriculture. Tribals and forest dwellers depend on forests for various services, minor forest produce, and livelihood creation. The tribal districts have lost 655 sq. kms of forest cover inside the recorded forest



area putting the rest under higher pressure. Parallely, an aggregated area of 18,486 sq. kms vested as individual forest rights under Forest Rights Act 2006 exists as pock marks in the recorded forests of the country today. People, vested with community forest rights under the Forest Rights Act 2006, freely collect and sell minor forest produce including bamboo. With this coupled with removal of bamboo from the category of timber through amendment to the Indian Forest Act 1927, however, more than 12,500 sq. kms of bamboo bearing areas of India have been lost between 2019 and 2021. Needless to mention, bamboo species are one of the best for carbon stock creation as well as sustenance of the green economy. Strangely enough, the provisions in the Forest Conservation Bill 2023 under consideration today do not

serve the objective related to carbon stock creation contained in its own preamble. Carbon stock creation is rarely an objective while selecting an area or species mix for compensatory afforestation. Different forest types existing in different areas have different capabilities of carbon sequestration. For India, the carbon stock aggregating different carbon pools is indicated as 100.92 thousand tonnes/ha. For Andamans & Nicobar it is 162.86 thousand tonnes/ha, while for plantations outside forests it is 64.22 thousand tonnes/ha. Thus, notwithstanding the physical distance and variance in ecological and biodiversity potentials, a compensatory plantation taken in Haryana in lieu of deforestation done in Andamans is, prima facie, a negative proposition from the perspective of carbon sequestration potential.

The climate change debate increasingly highlights forests as repositories of carbon. Dedicating forests for sequestration role shall involve trade-offs between diverse stakeholders and can negatively affect other forest-

related benefits. This could necessitate restriction of rights of forest dwellers and provision of suitable alternatives to them. In the wake of democratization and devolution of authority to the Gram Sabhas, accelerated loss of forests coupled with the recently recognized large number of forest rights, and forest protection and governance issues emerging due to the apparent disempowerment of the forestry sector on the ground, some critical questions crop up. Who will decide and how will the carbon and non-carbon benefits be prioritized? What are the biophysical and social and socio-economic trade-offs involved in prioritizing carbon sequestration over other forest benefits to various stakeholders? The policy makers have to seek early and definitive answers to these while embarking on the path to meet the target of carbon stock India has set for itself. Conservation of forests, though, cannot but remain a non-negotiable issue.

(BKP Sinha is a retired IFS officer, Arvind Jha is a member of National Committee of Forest Conservation Act)



BKP SINHA



ARVIND KUMAR JHA



FIRST COLUMN

VIOLENCE, AGGRESSION AND ONSET OF PEACE

The path chosen by Mahatma Gandhi resonates in our minds



RAVI VALLURI

A eons ago lived an overbearing and hubristic monarch. He scuttled all dissent and those opposed to his modus operandi were either exiled or obliterated. In order to escape his wrath, several of the denizens and vassal states decided to seek refuge in the sublime grace of Sakhya Muni, Lord Buddha. This act of defiance incensed the zealot. In a maximal fit of rage, he marched with his army to wage war against the apostle of peace and non-violence.

The suzerain, in an act, that he clearly intended to intimidate and pique the Buddha, spat at him thrice. The benevolent and solicitous soul smiled and merely remarked, "I do not accept this."

This deceptively simple remark incensed, indeed rattled the querulous monarch.

In the face of such dignity and equanimity, the monarch was forced to ask where the Buddha found the deep reserves of piety and composure. In reply, Lord Buddha invited him to eschew antipathetic thoughts and join the sangha.

AGGRESSION VS VIOLENCE: Pre-eminent psychologists distinguish aggression from violence. They postulate forceful destructive behaviour towards another individual or society as violence. Aggression, on the other hand, is based on the paradigm of an antipathetic intent. Psychologists deploy the word aggression to refer to the behaviour of an individual or a group that is intended to intentionally cause harm to other individuals or groups of persons.

Aggressive behaviour is based on the premise to torment or indulge in the defilement of a person or property. Violence is the perpetration of such an act.



UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSE: The maniacal desire to achieve a certain goal, desire or objective leads to aggressive behaviour and could result in a wanton violent act. Do we recall the famous or rather infamous Bodyline Series (1932-33)?

Douglas Jardine, the English captain deployed his fastest bowlers-Harold Larwood and Bill Voce to intimidate the batting machinery of Don Bradman, Bill Woodfull, Bill Ponsford and Alan Kippax. High-pitched deliveries were bowled on the leg stump incessantly and England won the series 4-1 against Australia.

HOSTILE AGGRESSION: It is interesting to note that hostile aggression and violent acts find root when an individual indulges in criminality in order to be charge sheeted and aspires to 'glory' via notoriety. The human mind often operates in repulsive and intriguing ways.

Distinguished psychologists have identified certain underlying reasons for harbouring aggressive feelings and concomitant violence. This could be a certain inborn tendency, essentially in the DNA of the individual or agony and frustration.

PEACE AND THE ART OF LIVING WAY: There have been apostles of peace in both the occidental and oriental worlds who have given up their lives to maintain peace and harmony. The path chosen by Jesus Christ, Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi resonates in our minds.

In recent times, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has transformed the lives of several Maoists, Naxals and extremists, who have eschewed violence, given up arms and joined the mainstream once again. Their minds have been transformed by practising the unique rhythmic breathing technique of Sudarshan Kriya.

Simultaneously their energies have been channelised to do sadhana, seva and satsang through the regular practice of yoga, pranayama and meditation. "Non-violence is an active force of the highest order. It is the soul-force or the power of the Godhead within us. Imperfect man cannot grasp the whole of that essence- he would not be able to bear its full blaze, but even an infinitesimal fraction of it, when it becomes active within us, can work wonders," wrote Gandhiji.

(The writer is an author and a spiritual teacher)

The war against NPAs isn't over yet

The government should strengthen mechanisms to give a fair deal to MSMEs



UTTAM GUPTA

According to a joint report by ASSOCHAM and Crisil Ratings, gross non-performing assets (NPAs) - an acronym for loans that have gone bad - of banks have declined by 0.9 to less than 5 per cent during the financial year ending March 31, 2023, and are expected to decline by another 1 per cent to a decadal low of less than 4 per cent by March 31, 2024. In respect of loans given to the corporate sector, gross NPAs are expected to be less than 2 per cent by March 31, 2024, down from a peak of 16 per cent as on March 31, 2018.

The public sector banks (PSBs) too have done remarkably well. According to the Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat K Karad, the gross NPA ratio of PSBs declined from the peak of 14.6 per cent in March 2018 to 5.53 per cent in December 2022.

The decline owes a lot to what Karad describes as a comprehensive 4R strategy implemented by Modi - government. The 4Rs are: Recognizing NPAs transparently, Resolution and recovery, Recapitalizing PSBs, and Reforms in the financial ecosystem.

Recognition is the most crucial component of the strategy. Under UPA - II (2009-2014), banks recklessly gave loans to corporate houses and businesses without assessing the viability of the projects and conducting due diligence. There was an element of 'inevitability' in such loans becoming NPAs. Indeed, these did become NPAs but were not recognized in the balance sheet.

In 2015, the Reserve Bank India (RBI) ordered an asset quality review (AQR) of all commercial banks to identify stressed assets and make necessary provisions in the balance sheet. As a result, their gross NPAs rose from about Rs 323,000 crore on March 31, 2015, to Rs 1036,000 crore as of March 31, 2018. As a percentage of the loans, it was 11.8 per cent (14.6 per cent for PSBs).

As for 'Resolution and recovery', in 2016, the government enacted the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). Superseding other subsisting laws gives a strong handle to banks for resolving NPAs within a strict time frame. In 2017, it amended the Banking Regulation Act (BRA) giving RBI the power to force banks to act if they don't do it on their own. On February 12, 2018, RBI issued a circular containing the specifics of how it was to be done.

Under it, for accounts with aggregate exposure greater than Rs 2,000 crore, as soon as there was a default in the account with any lender, all lenders - singly or jointly - shall initiate steps to cure the default by preparing and implementing a resolution plan (RP). This needed to be done within 180 days from the date of default.

In case of failure to meet this deadline, the lenders were required to refer the account to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) which would initiate proceedings under the IBC. The NCLT would get 180 days to complete the resolution process. A further 90 days are allowed in exceptional circumstances.

The raison d'être of imposing this timeline and involving RBI to shepherd the exercise was to sell the NPA-afflicted entity - as a going concern in an 'objective' and 'transparent' manner and maximize the realization from the sale.

Initially, things progressed well with NPAs worth around Rs 300,000 crore



BY TAKING AWAY POWERS FROM THE RBI AND GIVING TOO MUCH LEEWAY TO THE BANKS UNDER THE JUNE 7, 2019 CIRCULAR, THE SC INTERVENTION HAS SUBSTANTIALLY DILUTED THE IBC PROCESS

The writer is a policy analyst



handled by NCLT. But, the IBC process was opposed by the defaulting borrowers/promoters. They not only contested the NCLT rulings in the High Court and the Supreme Court (SC) thus causing delays but also challenged the constitutional validity of the February 12, 2018 circular. The SC held the circular illegal and ordered the RBI to come out with fresh guidelines.

Accordingly, the RBI came up with a revised circular dated June 7, 2019. It gives banks 180 days to come up with RP (in addition to 30 days to enter into an inter-lender agreement or ILA). If the banks don't meet this deadline, they are required to make an additional provision of 20 per cent. If they don't finalize within 365 days or one year, an additional 15 per cent provision has to be made.

Under normal ageing provisions, if a loan is in default for one year, it has to provide for 15 per cent. In case, the delay extends to 15 months, the normal ageing provision increases to 40 per cent. Add to this 35 per cent that needs to be made as per June 7, 2019 circular, and the total provisioning requirement will be a steep 75 per cent. Having provided for such a huge amount, there won't be any incentive left for the bank to recover the money under IBC.

By taking away powers from the RBI and giving too much leeway to the banks under the June 7, 2019 circular, the SC intervention has sub-

stantially diluted the IBC process. Against this backdrop, how come the NPAs situation has shown significant improvement?

A lot of it is due to the third R or 'Recapitalizing PSBs'. During 2016 - 2021, the Central government gave around Rs 300,000 crore as budgetary support to shore up the capital of PSBs. In the budget for 2021-22, it committed another Rs 200,000 crore by way of sovereign guarantee for the security receipts (SRs) to be issued by the asset reconstruction company (ARC) or the so-called 'bad bank' where the majority shareholding is with PSBs.

The Centre has goaded banks to undertake Reforms in the financial ecosystem with a focus on responsible lending, going for good quality assets, better monitoring and control over the use of loans, detecting likely stress in assets at an early stage etc. But, the banks have also got a boost from a rebound in GDP growth (during 2021-22, it was 8.9 per cent and a high of over 7 per cent during 2022-23) and associated acceleration in credit growth which enabled them to boost profits and clean up their balance sheets.

Ironically, even under this buoyant economic scenario, the position of the MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) segment is worrying. According to ASSOCHAM/Crisil Ratings, their gross NPAs are expected to increase from an already high of about 9.3 per cent

on March 31, 2022, to 10-11 per cent by March 2024. They are handicapped due to the big brothers (read: large companies) charging high prices for inputs and intermediates, delaying payments etc impacting the former's viability and cash flows.

For the overall NPA scenario and even large firms, the real test will come when the Indian economy comes under stress. Although, most of the institutions - Indian as well international - are projecting high growth during 2023-24 and beyond, the possibility of slippage is not ruled out especially when we consider the risk of inflation due to deterioration in the geopolitical situation, rising interest rates globally, contraction in external demand and so on.

To deal with rising NPAs in such situations, the IBC process has to be robust and efficient. But, the current scenario doesn't instill confidence. According to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), of the total 5,636 cases under IBC, 3,637 have been closed. Of the closed cases, nearly half i.e. 1,703 have ended in liquidation. During January-March 2022, recovery by financial creditors was only 10.2 per cent of the admitted claims.

The government/RBI should work for the revival of the February 12, 2018, RBI circular to navigate the IBC process. It should also strengthen mechanisms to give a fair deal to MSMEs.

Rahul needs to do more than Modi bashing abroad

Rahul Gandhi would do well to convince Indians back home that he is the right man to take on Modi. It is here the 2024 election would be fought

Why do Indian politicians woo the Diaspora in the United States and elsewhere? Why does the Diaspora, who can't vote in India, take an interest in their homeland? It is perhaps because, as India's G.D.P. grows, the Diaspora's role in India's foreign policy also rises.

The 32 million-strong global Indian Diaspora has emerged as one of the wealthiest minorities in many developed countries. Every year 2.5 million Indians (the highest annual number) migrate to other countries. Cumulative N.R.I. deposits are at \$136 billion as of February 2023.

Indian Americans like U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, Presidential hopefuls Nikki Haley and Vivek Ramaswamy play an increasingly important



KALYANI SHANKAR

(The writer is a senior journalist)

political role. Indian Origin Rishi Sunak is now the Prime Minister of the U.K. In the Corporate world, Satya Nadella (Microsoft), Sundar Pichai (Google), and Shantanu Narayen (Adobe) now head giant American multinational corporations. Ajay Banga just became the President of the World Bank. The B.J.P. realised the importance of the Diaspora long ago. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also aggressively wooed them. Late Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee appointed an Indian American as an 'ambassador at large' in addition to the regular U.S. envoy. However, he was withdrawn as the American government did not recognise him. Interestingly Congress Party did not take the Diaspora seriously. That could be

because the Grand Old Party ruled the country for 59 years since independence. Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, and Sonia Gandhi did not need this exercise for their international image.

Unsurprisingly, Rahul Gandhi has been reaching out since his successful U.S. tour in 2017. His visit to the United Kingdom in March and the U.S. this week is part of that image-building exercise. The dormant Overseas Congress, now headed by Sam Pitroda, has been activated. Rahul has acquired a raised profile after his successful 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' early this year. Added to that was the recent massive win in Karnataka. Congress Party felt it must seriously engage the Diaspora before the 2024 polls.

Curiously, Gandhi visited the U.S. three weeks before Modi's official visit. President Joe Biden will host the Prime Minister at the White House. Being the showman, Modi would hog the limelight in his last visit before the end of his second term. Modi vowed the U.S. in the past nine years with his Madison Square Garden meeting in New York in 2014 and his 'Howdy Modi rally' in Houston in 2019. He developed a first-name basis with the three American Presidents- Obama, Trump and Biden.

Rahul tried to begin a new conversation with students, academicians, Congressmen and intellectuals in various meetings. Confident and cheerful, he poked fun at Modi and his government.

Gandhi lavished praise on the Diaspora, "So thank you very much for holding up the Indian flag in America. The thrust of his meetings in California, New York and Washington- the three cities he visited, was that there was a hidden undercurrent. "For one minute, I don't believe the B.J.P. cannot be defeated," he said.

At the National press club meeting in Washington, Gandhi expressed hope for a strong comeback of his party in the coming elections. Gandhi talked about India's relations with China and Russia. The only endorsement of the Modi government was its stand on Russia and Ukraine.

"To be nasty to people, to be arrogant, to be violent,

these are not Indian values," Gandhi said at an event at the Jacob Javits Center in Manhattan. He called for Indians in the U.S. and back home to stand up for democracy and the Indian constitution. Scenes of his Bharat Jodo trip were displayed on the famous Times Square billboard, one of the world's busiest and most famous intersections in New York. For a politician who is no longer a parliament member, the Indian Overseas Congress mobilised enough crowds for his events. The B.J.P. is upset at Gandhi's criticism of Modi abroad. The External Affairs Minister S.Jaishankar was critical of his remarks on foreign soil. Even earlier, during his March trip to the United Kingdom, several B.J.P. ministers demanded an apology

from Gandhi for slinging mud on India.

Rahul told the Diaspora, "I need institutional structures to fight elections. I need a judicial system that protects me. I need a medium that is reasonably free. I need financial parity. I need a set of institutional structures that allow me to operate as a political party." And Gandhi noted, "I do not have them." Congress is happy about Rahul's U.S. visit. But he needs to do more than Modi-Bashing. Also, he must improve his delivery. ONE PART OF THE STORY IS about visiting the U.S. and the U.K., and the other speaking his mind with the Diaspora. But Gandhi must clearly spell out his vision for India and address bread and butter issues for the Indian electorate.

Ukraine launching major attacks: Russia

Kyiv accuses Moscow of misinformation

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian forces were making a major effort to punch through Russian defensive lines in southeast Ukraine for a second day, a Moscow-installed official said on Monday as Russia's Defence Ministry declared that it had foiled an assault in an illegally annexed region of the invaded country.

Kyiv authorities suggested the attack reports were a Russian misinformation ruse as the Ukrainian military prepares for a widely anticipated counteroffensive.

Vladimir Rogov, an official in the Russia-backed administration of Ukraine's partly occupied Zaporizhzhia province, said fighting resumed on its border with the eastern Donetsk region on Monday after Russian defences beat back a Ukrainian advance the previous day.

"The enemy threw an even bigger force into the attack than yesterday (Sunday)," and the new attempt to break through the front line was "more large-scale and organized," Rogov said, adding, "A battle is underway."

Rogov interpreted the Ukraine military movements as part of an effort by Kyiv to reach the Sea of Azov coast and cut the land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow annexed in 2014. Analysts have long viewed that strategy as likely because it would cut the Russian forces in two and severely strain supplies to Crimea, which has served as a key Russian military hub in the war that started on February 24, 2022.

Rogov's comments came after Moscow also claimed to have thwarted large Ukrainian attacks in the eastern Donetsk region, near its border with the Zaporizhzhia region. Donetsk is another of the four provinces that President Vladimir Putin claimed as Russian territory last fall and which Moscow partially controls.

Russia's Defence Ministry said it had pushed back a "large-scale" assault Sunday at five places in Donetsk province. The announcement couldn't be independently verified, and Ukrainian officials didn't confirm any assaults, but the reports fuelled speculation that a major Ukrainian ground operation could be underway as part of the anticipated counteroffensive.

A video published by the Ukrainian Defence Ministry showed soldiers putting a finger to their lips in a sign to keep quiet. "Plans love silence," it said on the screen. "There will be no announcement of the start."

The Centre for Strategic Communications of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said on Telegram that Russian forces were "stepping up their information and psychological operations". "In order to demoralise Ukrainians and mislead the community (including their own population), Russian propagandists will spread false information about the counteroffensive, its directions and the losses of the Ukrainian army. Even if there is no counteroffensive," a statement on Telegram read.

Ukrainian officials have kept Russia guessing about when and where it might launch a counteroffensive, or even whether it had already started. A possible counteroffensive, using advanced weapons supplied by Western allies, could provide a major morale boost for Ukrainians more than 15 months after Russia started its full-scale invasion.

Recent military activity, including drone attacks on Moscow, cross-border raids into Russia and sabotage and drone attacks on infrastructure behind Russian lines, has unnerved Russians. Analysts say those actions may represent the start of the counteroffensive. The Russian military on Monday said it repelled the latest Ukrainian incursion into Russia's Belgorod region, on the border in Ukraine. Russians who purport to be fighting alongside Ukrainian forces said they attacked on Sunday.

They were driven back by airstrikes and artillery fire, according to the Russian Defence Ministry. Driving out the Kremlin's forces is a daunting challenge for Kyiv's planners. Russia has built extensive defensive lines, including trenches, minefields and anti-tank obstacles.

Ukraine could launch simultaneous pushes in different areas of the front line that stretches for around 1,100 kilometres (nearly 700 miles), analysts say. Michael Clark, the former head of the Royal United Services Institute think tank, said the "increased tempo" of activity in recent weeks probably marked the start of the counteroffensive and that June is likely to see the start of Ukraine's ground operation.



This photo taken from video released by Russian Defense Ministry Press Service on Monday shows a Russian self-propelled gun firing towards Ukrainian positions at an undisclosed location. AP/PTI

Germany and Indonesia to strengthen defence ties

Jakarta (AP) — Germany and Indonesia agreed on Monday to strengthen their defence cooperation and plan a joint military exercise with other countries in the region. German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius discussed the growing ties in a meeting with his Indonesian counterpart, Prabowo Subianto, in Jakarta.

"We talked about the possibility of having a deal about some submarines. We were talking about the two minesweepers which are already on the way to Indonesia," Pistorius said.

Germany and Indonesia are also planning a joint military exercise with other regional partners, but no details have been disclosed. Both ministers attended the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Asia's annual defence and security forum, where US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Saturday criticised China's "bullying or coercion" in the Indo-Pacific region, including tensions over Taiwan and the South China Sea.

Mexico's ruling party secures governorship of most populous state

Naucalpan (AP) — A quick-count sampling of votes for governor of Mexico's most populous state suggested a victory late Sunday for the candidate from the governing party of President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, which would end nearly a century of uninterrupted rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party. Preliminary results indicated Delfina Gomez of the Morena party was likely to win between 52.1 per cent and 54.2 per cent of the ballots in the State of Mexico, compared with 43 per cent to 45.2 per cent for Alejandra del Moral, representing the opposition coalition, according to the National Electoral Institute.

The forecast was based on representative sampling of voting stations with at least 95 per cent certainty. The outcome will not be final until all ballots were counted. Participation was between 48.7 and 50.2 per cent of eligible state voters.

Del Moral conceded shortly after the preliminary forecast was announced. "In democracy to be able to win, you have to

know how to lose and I am a democrat," she said, adding she had total respect for the electoral authorities.

Gomez, a schoolteacher making her second bid for the post, held a healthy lead in recent polling over del Moral. The former mayor representing the PRI struggled to attract a fed-up electorate bent on change. Gomez, who will become the state's first female governor, thanked del Moral Sunday night for conceding quickly. "Respect for democracy is an indispensable condition for building the State of Mexico for the good of all," she wrote on Twitter. 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 voters appeared ready to finally oust the PRI in favour of Lopez Obrador's Morena party in a race closely watched as a preview of the 2024 presidential election.

Plane that caused fighter jet scramble over DC crashes

AP ■ WASHINGTON

A wayward and unresponsive business plane that flew over the nation's capital Sunday afternoon caused the military to scramble a fighter jet before the plane crashed in Virginia, officials said. The fighter jet caused a loud sonic boom that was heard across the capital region. Hours later, police said rescuers had reached the site of the plane crash in a rural part of the Shenandoah Valley and that no survivors were found.

The Federal Aviation Administration says the Cessna Citation took off from Elizabethton, Tennessee, on Sunday and was headed for Long Island's MacArthur Airport. Inexplicably, the plane turned around over New York's Long Island and flew a straight path down over D.C. before it crashed over mountainous terrain near Montebello, Virginia, around 3:30 p.m.

It was not immediately clear why the plane was nonresponsive, why it crashed or how many people were on board. The plane flew directly over the nation's capital, though it was



Search and rescue teams leave the command post at St. Mary's Wilderness en route to the Blue Ridge Parkway to search for the site where a Cessna Citation crashed over mountainous terrain near Montebello on Sunday. AP/PTI

technically flying above some of the most heavily restricted airspace in the nation.

A US official confirmed to The Associated Press that the military jet had scrambled to respond to the small plane, which wasn't responding to radio transmissions and later crashed. The official was not authorized to publicly discuss details of the military operation and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Flight tracking sites showed the jet suffered a rapid spiralling descent, dropping at one point at a rate of more than 30,000 feet per minute before crashing in the St. Mary's Wilderness. The North American Aerospace Defense Command later said in a statement that the F-16 was authorised to travel at supersonic speeds, which caused a sonic boom that was heard in Washington and parts of Virginia and Maryland.

Turkish forces arrive in Kosovo to bolster NATO-led peacekeepers

AP ■

A Turkish commando battalion requested by NATO has arrived in Kosovo to assist in quelling recent violent unrest in the Balkan country. The Turkish Defence Ministry shared a video on Sunday showing troops wearing the insignia of the Kosovo Force, a NATO-led peacekeeping mission established in 1999, departing Turkey and arriving in Kosovo. Violent clashes with ethnic Serbs a week ago left 30 international soldiers — 11 Italians and 19 Hungarians — and more than 50 demonstrators injured. The injuries the soldiers suffered included fractures and burns from improvised explosive incendiary devices.

The clashes grew out of an earlier confrontation after ethnic Albanian candidates who were declared the winners of local elections in northern Kosovo entered municipal buildings to take office and were blocked by Serbs. Ethnic Serbs overwhelmingly boycotted the votes. Serbia and its former province Kosovo have been at odds for decades,

with Belgrade refusing to recognize Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence. The violence near their shared border has stirred fear of a renewal of a 1998-99 conflict in Kosovo that claimed more than 10,000 lives and resulted in the KFOR peacekeeping mission.

After the soldiers were injured last week, NATO said it would send an additional 700 troops to northern Kosovo. The government of Kosovo and representatives of Serb minority exchanged tit-for-tat conditions to de-escalate the situation. Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti said the government might consider holding fresh elections in four northern cities with majority Serb populations but not before gangs responsible for violence leave. The ethnic Serb Srpska List Party said it would participate in new municipal elections but that the government needed to first withdraw special police forces from northern Kosovo and proceed with establishing an association of majority Serb communities.

EU top court says that Poland's justice reform infringes EU law

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union stepped up its rule-of-law fight with member state Poland on Monday when the bloc's highest court confirmed that Warsaw had refused to comply with EU rules on judicial independence for which it has already lost over half a billion euros in fines. The European Court of Justice ruled on Monday that Poland's 2019 justice reform infringed EU law after the European Commission, the bloc's executive branch, claimed that the Polish Supreme Court lacked the necessary independence and impartiality.

"By today's judgment, the Court upholds the Commission's action," a court statement said.

It added "the value of the rule of law is an integral part of the very identity of the European Union as a common legal order and is given con-

crete expression in principles containing legally binding obligations for the Member States."

It said Poland did not meet these obligations.

Amid a plethora of condemnation and criticism, the court said "the measures thus adopted by the Polish legislature are incompatible with the guarantees of access to an independent and impartial tribunal."

The Polish law requires judges to divulge membership of an association or party and allows that information to be made public.

The ECJ ruling said the provisions were "liable to expose judges to risks of undue stigmatization."

The disagreement over the functioning of the Supreme Court is only one of several disputes that the right-wing government in Warsaw has with the EU institutions.

Pence challenges Donald Trump with Presidential nomination

New York (AP) — Former Vice President Mike Pence is filing paperwork on Monday declaring his campaign for president in 2024, setting up a challenge to his former boss, Trump, just two years after their time in the White House ended with an insurrection at the US Capitol and Pence fleeing for his life. Pence, the nation's 48th vice president, will formally launch his bid for the Republican nomination with a video and kickoff event in Des Moines, Iowa, on Wednesday, which is his 64th birthday, according to people familiar with his plans. He was set to file papers making his candidacy official with the Federal EC. While Trump is currently leading the early fight with Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis polling consistently in second, Pence supporters see a lane for a reliable conservative who espouses many of the previous administration's policies but without the constant tumult.

Blinken takes aim at Israeli settlements

Washington (AP) — Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Monday that the expansion of Israeli settlements and ongoing demolitions of Palestinian homes in the occupied West Bank are taking Israel further away from peace with the Palestinians.

Yet, he stressed that the US-Israel relationship remains "iron-clad," lauded American security commitments to the Jewish state and said the Biden administration will continue to promote normalization between Israel and its Arab neighbors, particularly with Saudi Arabia.

At the same time, he made clear the administration's displeasure with actions that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right government has taken in expanding Jewish settlements and increasing Palestinian home demolitions. "Settlement expansion clearly presents an obstacle to the horizon of hope we seek," Blinken said in a speech to the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee in Washington. "Likewise, any move toward

annexation of the West Bank, de facto or de jure, disruption of the historic status quo at the holy sites, the continuing demolitions of homes and the evictions of families that have lived in their homes for generations damage prospects for two states," he said. Improving Israeli-Arab relations cannot replace a two-state solution with the Palestinians, he said.

"Integration and normalisation efforts are not a substitute for progress between Israelis and Palestinians, and they should not come at its expense," Blinken said.

"Israel's deepened relationships with its partners can and should advance the well-being of the Palestinian people and the prospects of a two-state solution," he added. Blinken will visit Saudi Arabia this week, in part to discuss prospects for the Saudis joining the so-called "Abraham Accords" that were completed during the Trump administration between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco.

'Iranian Revolutionary Guard boats harass ship in strait of Hormuz'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The US Navy said on Monday its sailors and the United Kingdom Royal Navy came to the aid of a ship in the crucial Strait of Hormuz after Iran's Revolutionary Guard "harassed" it. Three fast-attack Guard vessels with armed troops aboard approached the merchant ship at a close distance on Sunday afternoon, the US Navy said in a statement. It offered black-and-white images it said came from a US Navy Boeing P-8 Poseidon overhead, which showed three small ships close to the commercial ship.

The US Navy's guided-missile destroyer USS McFaul and the Royal Navy's frigate HMS Lancaster responded to the incident, with the Lancaster launching a helicopter.

"The situation deescalated approximately an hour later when the merchant vessel confirmed the fast-attack craft departed the scene," the Navy said. "The merchant ship con-

Its location also matched information about the incident given by the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, a British military operation overseeing traffic in the region. The vessel also resembled the images released by the Navy. The ship's registered manager, Trust Bulkers of Athens, Greece, did not respond to a request for comment. Iran's state-run IRNA news agency later quoted Guard Rear Adm Abbas Gholamshahi claiming that his vessels simply responded to the distress signal from the ship.

The Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf, sees 20 per cent of the world's oil pass through it.

While the Navy did not identify the vessel involved, ship-tracking data from MarineTraffic.com analysed by AP showed the Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier Venture erratically changed course as it traveled through the strait at the time of the incident.

However, the signal came because armed men were seen aboard the small vessels identified by the Navy as belonging to the Guard.

This latest incident comes after a series of maritime incidents involving Iran following the US unilaterally withdrawing from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018.

The suspected American seizure of the Suez Rajan, a tanker linked to a US private

OpenAI boss 'heartened' by talks with world leaders

AP ■ TEL AVIV

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said on Monday he was encouraged by a desire shown by world leaders to contain any risks posed by the artificial intelligence technology his company and others are developing. Altman visited Tel Aviv, a tech powerhouse, as part of a world tour that has so far taken him to several European capitals. Altman's tour is meant to promote his company, the maker of ChatGPT — the popular AI chatbot — which has unleashed a frenzy around the globe.

I am very heartened as I've been doing this trip around the world, getting to meet world leaders," Altman said during a

visit with Israel's ceremonial President Isaac Herzog.

Altman said his discussions showed "the thoughtfulness" and "urgency" among world leaders over how to figure out how to "mitigate these very huge risks."

The world tour comes after hundreds of scientists and tech industry leaders, including high-level executives at Microsoft and Google, issued a warning about the perils that artificial intelligence poses to humankind. Altman was also a signatory.

Worries about artificial intelligence systems outsmarting humans and running wild have intensified with the rise of a new generation of highly capable AI chatbots.

Countries around the



world are scrambling to come up with regulations for the developing technology, with the European Union blazing the trail with its AI Act expected to be approved later this year.

"With the great opportuni-

ties of this incredible technology, there are also many risks to humanity and to the independence of human beings in the future," Herzog told Altman. "We have to make sure that this development is used for the wellness of humanity."

Israel has emerged in recent years as a tech leader, with the industry producing some noteworthy technology used across the globe. Among its more controversial exports has been Pegasus, a powerful and sophisticated spyware product by the Israeli company NSO, which critics say has been used by authoritarian countries to spy on activists and dissidents.

The Israeli military also has begun using artificial intelligence for certain tasks, including crowd control procedures.

Altman has met with world leaders including British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, French President Emmanuel Macron, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

HK journalist wins appeal in court ruling upholding media freedom

AP ■ HONG KONG

An award-winning Hong Kong journalist won an appeal quashing her conviction related to work on her investigative documentary Monday in a rare court ruling upholding media freedom in the territory. Bao Choy was found guilty in April 2021 of deceiving the government by getting vehicle ownership records for journalistic purposes after she had declared in her online application that she would use the information for "other traffic and transport related issues."

The investigative journalist was trying to track down perpetrators of a mob attack on protesters and commuters inside a train station during the massive anti-government protests in 2019 for her documentary. Choy was fined 6,000 Hong Kong Dollars (USD 765) for two counts of making false statements at that time and called it "a very dark day for all journalists in Hong Kong."

That ruling also sparked outrage among local journalists over the city's shrinking press freedom. On Monday, judges of the city's top court unanimously ruled in Choy's favour in a written judgment, quashing her conviction and setting aside the sentence. "The issues of falsity and knowledge were wrongly decided against the appellant because her journalistic investigation into the use of the vehicle on the dates in question did fall into the wide catchall category of other traffic and transport related matters," the judgment read.

Even if it did not, it was "not an irresistible inference that she knew that to be false," the judgment added. The story Choy co-produced, titled "7.21 Who Owns the Truth," won the Chinese-language documentary award at the Human Rights Press Awards in 2021. The judging panel hailed it as "an investigative reporting classic" that had chased "the smallest clues, interrogating the powerful without fear or favor."

Polls in Pak in Oct: Defence Min

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The general elections in Pakistan will be held without any delay in October this year, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said, dispelling speculation about a possible postponement in polls.

Political experts firmly believe that only free, fair and timely general elections can bring back desperately-needed political stability in Pakistan, which is also facing a severe economic crisis.

The opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party led by ousted prime minister Imran Khan had expressed apprehensions that the ruling coalition may delay the general elections.

"The assemblies will complete their five-year term in August and polls will take place within the next 60 days. Elections will be held on time," Asif said on Sunday.

When asked what he meant by "on time", he replied: "In October. Elections will take place in October without any

delay," The Express Tribune newspaper quoted the senior Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader as saying. According to the constitution, a general election to the National Assembly or a Provincial Assembly shall be held within 60 days following the day on which the term of the assembly is due to expire, unless the Assembly has been dissolved sooner.

The PTI party dissolved the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial assemblies in January this year, hoping that the move would force the ruling alliance into dissolving other legislatures and prompt it to hold elections within the 90-day period.

However, that did not happen as talks on deciding a poll date between the government and the Khan-led PTI party failed to yield results.

The government has repeatedly opposed holding snap polls or holding polls for the national and provincial legislatures separately, citing a lack of security, funds and



File photo of Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif

fresh census results.

Even the Supreme Court's intervention could not lead to elections in the two provinces where caretaker governments are functioning even after the expiry of their 90-day term.

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) which is a part of the ruling coalition had also constitut-

ed a three-member committee to convince other parties in the ruling alliance about holding polls on time. PPP Co-Chairman and former Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has even said that delaying general elections beyond October would be "foolish".

The Pakistan Institute of

Legislative Development and Transparency (Pildat), a think tank focusing on political and public policy research, has called for holding free and fair general elections for all the assemblies by October 2023.

"General Elections for [the] National [Assembly] and four provincial assemblies in Pakistan must be held latest by October 2023 after the National Assembly completes its 5-year term on 12th August," it said, adding the Election Commission of Pakistan must be fully prepared for that.

The current National Assembly will complete its five-year term on August 12, Pildat said, adding the fresh general election must be conducted within 60 days, as laid down in the Constitution of Pakistan, which suggests the latest conceivable date for the 2023 general elections is October 12.

However, it added, if the National Assembly is dissolved even one day before the completion of its term, the election must be held within 90 days.

Video shows 'unsafe Chinese manoeuvre' in Taiwan Strait

AP ■ BANGKOK

The United States military released video Monday of what it called an "unsafe" Chinese maneuver in the Taiwan Strait on the weekend, in which a Chinese navy ship cut sharply across the path of an American destroyer, forcing the US ship to slow to avoid a collision.

The incident occurred Saturday as the American destroyer USS Chung-Hoon and Canadian frigate HMCS Montreal were conducting a so-called "freedom of navigation" transit of the strait between Taiwan and mainland China.

China claims the democratic self-governing island of Taiwan as part of its own territory, and maintains the strait is part of its exclusive economic zone, while the U.S. and its allies regularly sail through and fly over the passage to emphasize their contention that the waters are international. During the Saturday transit, the Chinese guided-missile destroyer overtook the Chung-Hoon on its port side, then veered across its bow at a distance of some 150 yards (137 meters), according to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. The American destroyer held its course, but reduced speed to 10 knots "to avoid a collision," the military said.

The video released Monday shows the Chinese ship cutting across the course of the American one, then straightening out to start sailing in a parallel direction.

Indo-Pacific Command said the actions violated mar-



In this photo provided by the US Navy, the USS Chung-Hoon observes a Chinese navy ship conduct what it called an "unsafe" Chinese maneuver in the Taiwan Strait on Saturday in which the Chinese navy ship cut sharply across the path of the American destroyer, forcing the US ship to slow to avoid a collision. The incident occurred as the American destroyer and Canadian frigate HMCS Montreal were conducting a so-called "freedom of navigation" transit of the strait between Taiwan and mainland China.

itime rules of safe passage in international water.

The Chinese ship did not attempt a similar maneuver on the Canadian frigate, which was sailing behind the American destroyer. "Chung-Hoon and Montreal's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the combined U.S.-Canadian commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific," Indo-Pacific Command said. "The U.S. military flies, sails, and operates safely and responsibly anywhere international law allows." The US recently accused China of also performing an "unnecessarily aggressive maneuver" in the air, saying a Chinese J-16 fighter jet late last month flew directly in front of the nose of a US Air Force reconnaissance aircraft over the South China Sea. The close-calls have raised con-

cerns of a possible accident that could lead to an escalation between the two countries' militaries at a time when tensions in the region are already high. The incident in the Taiwan Strait came on a day when both US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Chinese Defense Minister Gen. Li Shangfu were in Singapore for an annual defense conference. Li on Sunday suggested that the US and its allies have created the danger with their patrols, and was intent on provoking China. "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."

Defectors from ex-PM's PTI form new outfit

PTI ■ LAHORE

A group of former provincial lawmakers who quit ex-prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party over the May 9 attacks on sensitive military installations and government buildings, on Monday floated a new outfit called the "Democrats".

The former home minister of the Punjab province Hashim Dogar who quit Khan's PTI last month, is leading this outfit, which also includes former education minister Dr Murad Raas. There was no clarity over whether this outfit will align with some of the bigger political parties like the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) or Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Neither has there been any information on whether the "Democrats" plans to register with the Election

Commission of Pakistan.

"One thing is clear, that the Democrats will continue acting as an opposition to the ruling Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)," Raas was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper.

On May 9, violent protests erupted after paramilitary Rangers arrested 70-year-old Khan, the chairman of PTI, from the Islamabad High Court premises in connection with a corruption case.

Khan's party workers vandalised a dozen military installations, including the Lahore Corps Commander House, the Mianwali airbase and the ISI building in Faisalabad in response to his arrest.

The mob also stormed the Army headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi for the first time.

Thousands of Khan's supporters were arrested following the violence that the powerful

Army described as a "dark day" in the history of the country. The crackdown launched after May 9 violent protests have thrown PTI into a deep existential crisis with dozens of key party leaders quitting the party on a daily basis.

Khan on Monday said Pakistanis are living in the "dark ages" as the authorities were using Nazi Germany-era law of kin punishment against his supporters amid silence from the Supreme Court. Security agencies across the country have detained thousands of workers of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in connection with the attacks on military installations after Khan was arrested in a corruption case last month.

"We are now living in the dark ages. Nazi Germany-era law of kin punishment is being practised against PTI. How long will the SC (Supreme Court) allow complete violation of fundamental rights of anyone linked to Pakistan's

Dogar and Raas are some of the prominent legislators, along with PTT's Secretary General Asad Umar, senior leader Fawad Chaudhry and former minister Shireen Mazari, to have parted ways.

So far, over 100 leaders and former lawmakers have quit PTI, with Pakistan's law-enforcement agencies having arrested over 10,000 workers from various parts of the country.

Nazi Germany-era law being used against my supporters: Imran

Lahore (PTI): Former prime minister Imran Khan on Monday said Pakistanis are living in the "dark ages" as the authorities were using Nazi Germany-era law of kin punishment against his supporters amid silence from the Supreme Court. Security agencies across the country have detained thousands of workers of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in connection with the attacks on military installations after Khan was arrested in a corruption case last month.

"We are now living in the dark ages. Nazi Germany-era law of kin punishment is being practised against PTI. How long will the SC (Supreme Court) allow complete violation of fundamental rights of anyone linked to Pakistan's

biggest political party?" Khan said in a series of tweets. Khan, the chief of PTI said, "In other countries where this barbaric law (of kin punishment) was imposed, was in totalitarian states like Stalin's Russia, North Korea and China during the Cultural Revolution."

Police on Monday picked up the father of Hammad Azhar, the former finance minister in the PTI government, as security agencies continue to detain family members of those who escaped arrest in connection with the May 9 riots. Azhar has been in hiding since the attacks on the state installations by PTI workers. The police claim that he was one of the planners of the attacks.

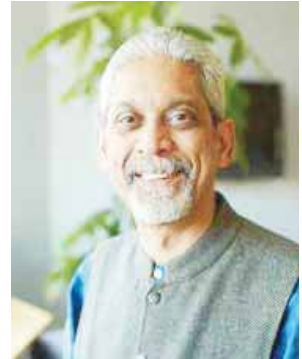
Patel is new chair of Harvard Medical School's Global Health and Social Medicine

New York (PTI): India-born Vikram Patel, a well-known researcher and mental health expert, will be the next chair of the Harvard Medical School's Department of Global Health and Social Medicine.

Mumbai-born Patel, who is the Pershing Square Professor of Global Health at the Blavatnik Institute at Harvard Medical School, will assume charge on September 1, according to an official announcement last week.

Patel, whose work focused on the burden of mental health problems across the life course, their association with social disadvantage, and the use of community resources for their prevention and treatment, will succeed Paul Farmer, who led the department until his death in February 2022.

"Vikram is both a worthy successor and uniquely prepared to carry the torch," said George Q. Daley, dean of the



Harvard Medical School (HMS), in a letter to the community announcing the appointment.

"A venerable and charismatic educator, Vikram was recruited to HMS in 2017 by Paul himself, and he shares Paul's philosophy that academic engagement is key to delivering quality and equitable health care to all," Daley said.

Sunak confirms plans to house illegal migrants on ships

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Monday claimed that his plan to "stop the boats" of illegal migrants coming to UK shores is working as he announced plans to house them on ships to reduce pressure on taxpayer-funded hotels.

Addressing a press conference at the border town of Dover in Kent, Sunak said the first such ship will be ready later this month and two others to accommodate a further 1,000 migrants soon after.

He pointed out that important legislation, referred to as the Illegal Migration Bill or Stop the Boats Bill, has cleared the House of Commons and will give his government the right to detain and deport migrants who enter the country illegally.

"I promised we would get illegal migrants out of hotels - and into alternative sites, including military facilities," said Sunak.



"To reduce pressures on local communities, we'll also house people on ships. The first will arrive in Portland in the next fortnight. And we've secured another two today that will accommodate another 1,000," he said.

New large sites will also open at Wethersfield and

Scampton, with hundreds of migrants expected to move in over the next few months with a capacity to accommodate around 3,000 by later this year. Sunak said that besides adding alternative accommodation options, he is determined to make more efficient use of hotels.

"By asking people to share rooms, where it's appropriate to do so we've found an additional 11,500 places which will save taxpayers an extra GBP 250 million a year. And I say to those migrants who are objecting: this is more than fair," said Sunak, in an apparent reference to reports that emerged over the weekend of migrants protesting outside a hotel in central London against being forced to share rooms.

"If you're coming here illegally, claiming sanctuary from death, torture, or persecution then you should be willing to share a taxpayer-funded hotel room in central London," he said.

Indonesia, Australia affirm def ties amid China concerns

AP ■ JAKARTA

Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles met his Indonesian counterpart on Monday to deepen security ties amid China's increasingly assertive activity in the Indo-Pacific region.

Indonesian Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto said he and Marles discussed ways to facilitate cooperation between their militaries.

"Cooperation between Indonesia and Australia can make an important contribution to regional peace and stability," Subianto said, adding that the two governments agreed to further strengthen their security ties, including joint military training in Australia and the education of Indonesian cadets at Australian academies.

Military exchanges between the two neighbours have previously included counterterrorism and border protection. Marles declined to make any comment to the media after meeting with Subianto. He vowed in a statement released by the Australian Embassy in Jakarta ahead of the talks to deepen defense engagement with Australia's closest major neighbour. "I look forward to progressing our comprehensive strategic partnership during my visit to Jakarta," Marles said in the statement. Although Indonesia, a vast archipelago nation of more than 270 million

people, is often presented as one of Australia's most important neighbours and strategic allies, the relationship has undergone various ups and downs.

Recent disagreements include allegations of wiretapping by the Australian Signals Directorate in 2013 to monitor the private phone calls of then Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, his wife and other senior officials; Indonesia's use of capital punishment on Australian drug smugglers; and cases of people smuggling.

In 2017, Indonesia temporarily suspended military cooperation with Australia, including joint training, education, exchanges of officers and visits, over an alleged insult against the Indonesian state ideology "Pancasila" and the Indonesian military at an Australian military base.

In September 2021, Indonesia filed a diplomatic protest against Australia for being slow to provide information about its activities in the AUKUS trilateral pact involving the United States and the United Kingdom, including plans for Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines. Last year, Australia, along with Japan and Singapore, joined for the first time the annual Indonesia-US joint combat exercise called Super Garuda Shield, making it the largest since the drills began in 2009.

More than two million people displaced in Burkina Faso

AP ■ DAKAR (SENEGAL)

Violence linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group has made Burkina Faso a country with one of the world's fastest-growing populations of internally displaced people, with the number mushrooming by more than 2,000 per cent since 2019, according to government data.

Figures released last month showed more than 2 million people are internally displaced in the West African nation, the majority of them women and children, fuelling a dire humanitarian crisis as the conflict pushed people from their homes, off their farms and into congested urban areas or makeshift camps.

Aid groups and the government are scrambling to respond amid a lack of funds and growing needs. One in four people requires aid, and tens of thousands are facing catastrophic levels of hunger. Yet not even half of the USD 800 million humanitarian response budget requested last year by aid groups was funded, according to the United Nations.

"The spectrum of consequences (for people) is vast but grim at every point. A lot of people might die, and they're dying because they weren't able to access food and health services, because they weren't properly protected, and the humanitarian assistance and the government response wasn't sufficient," Alexandra Lamarche, a senior fellow at advocacy group Refugees International, said.

The violence has divided a once-peaceful nation, leading to two coups last year. Military leaders vowed to stem the insecurity, but jihadi attacks have continued and spread since Capt. Ibrahim Traore seized power in September.

The government retains control of less than 50 per cent of the country, largely in rural areas, according to conflict analysts. Al-Qaida and Islamic State-affiliated groups control or threaten large areas, said Rida Lyammouri, senior fellow at the Policy Centre for the New South, a Morocco-based think tank. "State security forces don't have the resources (human and equipment) to fight both groups at all fronts," he said.

The jihadis' strategy of blocking towns, preventing people from moving freely and goods from flowing in, has compounded the displacement crisis. Some 800,000 people in more than 20 towns are under siege, say aid groups.

Prince Harry a no-show on first day of court showdown

AP ■ LONDON

Prince Harry's phone hacking trial against the publisher of the Daily Mirror kicked off Monday without him present — and the judge was not happy.

Harry's lawyer said the Duke of Sussex would not be available to testify after opening statements because he caught a flight back from Los Angeles on Sunday after the birthday of his 2-year-old daughter, Lilibet.

"I'm a little surprised," Justice Timothy Fancourt said, noting he had directed Harry to be in court for the first day of his case.

Mirror Group Newspaper's lawyer, Andrew Green, said he was "deeply troubled" by Harry's absence on opening day. Harry originally was scheduled to testify on Tuesday. His lawyer was told last week the duke should attend the trial on Monday in case the opening statements concluded before the end of the day.

The case is the first of the Duke of Sussex's several lawsuits against the media to go to trial, and one of three

alleging tabloid publishers unlawfully snooped on him.

Harry will be the first member of the British royal family in more than a century to testify in court. He is expected to describe his anguish and anger over being hounded by the media throughout his life, and its impact on those around him. Harry, 38, has blamed paparazzi for causing the car crash that killed his mother, Princess Diana, and said harassment and intrusion by the UK press, including allegedly racist articles, led him and his wife, Meghan, to flee to the US in 2020 and leave royal life behind.

Articles he has cited date back to his 12th birthday, in 1996, when the Mirror reported Harry was feeling "badly" about the divorce of his mother and father, now King Charles III. Harry said in court documents that the reports made him wonder who he could trust as he feared friends and associates were betraying him by leaking information to the newspapers. His circle of friends grew smaller and he suffered "huge

bouts of depression and paranoia".

Relationships fell apart as the women in his life — and even their family members — were "dragged into the chaos".

He says he later discovered that the source wasn't disloyal friends but aggressive journalists and the private investigators they hired to eavesdrop on voicemails and track him to locations as remote as Argentina and an island off Mozambique.

Mirror Group Newspapers said it didn't hack Harry's phone and its articles were based on legitimate reporting techniques. The publisher admitted and apologised for hiring a private eye to dig up dirt on one of Harry's nights out at a bar, but the resulting 2004 article headlined "Sex on the beach with Harry" is not among the 33 in question at trial.

Phone hacking that involved guessing or obtaining security codes to listen in on celebrities' cell phone voice messages was widespread at British tabloids in the early years of this century.

It became an existential crisis for



the industry after the revelation in 2011 that the News of the World had hacked the phone of a slain 13-year-

old girl. Owner Rupert Murdoch shut down the paper and several of his executives faced criminal trials.

Mirror Group has paid more than 100 million pounds (USD 125 million) to settle hundreds of unlawful information-gathering claims, and printed an apology to phone hacking victims in 2015. But it denies executives — including Piers Morgan, who was editor of the Daily Mirror editor between 1995 and 2004 — knew about hacking.

Harry's fury at the UK press — and sometimes at his own royal relatives for what he sees as their collusion with the media — runs through his memoir, "Spare", and interviews conducted by Oprah Winfrey and others.

His claims will face a tough audience in court when he is cross-examined by Mirror Group's attorney.

The opening statements being presented on Monday mark the second phase of a trial in which Harry and three others have accused the Mirror of phone hacking and unlawful information gathering.

Sensex, Nifty settle higher for second straight day

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher for the second straight session on Monday, boosted by buying in index heavyweights Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank and M&M stocks amid a positive trend in global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 240.36 points or 0.38 per cent to settle at 62,787.47. During the day, it jumped 396.09 points or 0.63 per cent to 62,943.20.

The NSE Nifty advanced 59.75 points or 0.32 per cent to end at 18,593.85.

"Optimism in global equities aided the local market sentiment. Also, the end to the US debt ceiling uncertainty and expectations of a rate hike pause by the US Fed provided some fodder to the struggling markets," said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd.

From the Sensex pack, Mahindra & Mahindra climbed 3.81 per cent and Axis Bank advanced 2.68 per cent, followed by Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, Reliance Industries, Maruti, IndusInd Bank and Sun Pharma.

Asian Paints, Tech Mahindra, Nestle, Hindustan Unilever, Kotak Mahindra Bank and ITC were among the laggards.



In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.51 per cent, and the midcap index gained 0.29 per cent.

Among the indices, auto jumped 1.23 per cent, capital goods climbed 1.14 per cent, industrials (1.07 per cent), utilities (0.91 per cent) and services (0.56 per cent).

IT and tech were the laggards. "Majority of the sectors ended in the green, except FMCG, IT, and PSU Bank. Auto and Private Banks were top gainers among the sectors."

"Nifty is gradually inching higher towards its life highs supported by smart gains index heavyweights. Auto and financials are likely to be in focus ahead of the RBI policy meeting this week and are expected to remain in momentum," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the green.

Equity markets in Europe were trading on a mixed note. The US markets ended significantly higher on Friday.

"Global stocks followed Wall Street mostly higher on Monday after strong US hiring data suggested a possible recession might be further away, while smaller wage gains stoked hopes inflationary pressures are weakening," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

US President Joe Biden signed legislation on Saturday that lifts the nation's debt ceiling, averting an unprecedented default on the federal government's debt.

India's services sector growth eased slightly in May, but registered the second-strongest rate of growth in close to 13 years, on favourable demand

conditions and new client wins, a monthly survey said on Monday.

The seasonally adjusted S&P Global India Services PMI Business Activity Index fell from 62 in April to 61.2 in May.

Despite falling from April, the latest reading indicated that output increased at the second-quickest pace since July 2010.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 1.92 per cent to USD 77.59 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 658.88 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

"Markets started the week with modest gains, tracking firm global cues. The rebound in the US markets has prompted this uptick but we need stability on the global front for a new high," Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Rupee falls 29 paise to close at 82.68 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

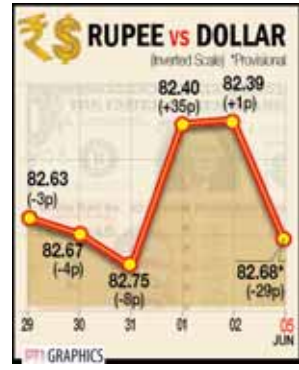
The rupee fell 29 paise to close at 82.68 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, weighed down by the strength of the American currency in the overseas market.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 82.47 against the dollar, and finally settled at 82.68 (provisional), down 29 paise from its previous close.

During the day, the rupee touched a high of 82.45 and a low of 82.68 against the greenback. On Friday, the rupee had settled at 82.39 against the dollar. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.24 per cent to 104.26.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 1.62 per cent to USD 77.36 per barrel. According to Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, the rupee registered the worst day after March 14 amid weaker regional currencies after a surge in the US dollar backed by the upbeat US job data.

The interest rate pause from the RBI is also set to weigh on the currency as a narrow interest rate differential disincentivising investors, Parmar said. The dollar demand from oil importers surged after crude oil prices recovered from a multi-month low as Saudi Arabia pledged a production cut at the OPEC+ summit. Short-term



volatility is expected to surge ahead of the RBI meeting this week. "Spot USD/INR has strong support at 82.22 (100-day simple moving average) and resistance at 82.95, the current year high," Parmar said.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed 240.36 points or 0.38 per cent higher at 62,787.47 points. The broader NSE Nifty advanced 59.75 points or 0.32 per cent to 18,593.85 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Friday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 658.88 crore, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, India's forex reserves dropped by USD 4.339 billion to USD 589.138 billion for the week ended May 26, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. In the previous week, the reserves had declined by USD 6.052 billion to USD 593.477 billion.



'Banking sector needs to address governance gaps to meet upcoming challenges'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's banking sector needs to address gaps in the governance frameworks and assurance functions in a bid to gear up to meet the future challenges as the country strives to become a developed nation by 2047, RBI Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao said.

Addressing a conference of directors of banks organised by the Reserve Bank of India last month, he emphasised that financial institutions will need extraordinary amounts of financial resources to support growth to realise the visions for a brighter tomorrow.

"Raising these resources would not be a constraint for financial intermediaries with robust governance frameworks as they can command a governance premium. It is important in this context to gain and retain the trust of other stakeholders such as depositors and various providers of financial resources," he said.

This is best ensured by strong governance, control, and assurance functions in financial institutions, he added. Also, he said, "while we collectively aspire for an efficient financial intermediation with positive spillover to the real sectors, these aspirations are set in an increasingly competitive, diverse, and interconnected world."

As the saying goes, he said, the time to fix the roof is while the sun is shining. "The banking sector in India at this juncture is sound, resilient, and financially healthy. So, the time is perhaps right to improve the plumbing by addressing the gaps in governance frameworks, assurance functions and strategise for better times ahead," he said.

Observing that it is essential for the management to deliver good performance, he said but more importantly this should be achieved by adhering to acceptable customer and market conduct and best corporate governance practices.

"We often see that the matters of conduct do not get the priority or attention of the Board which they should be getting. Customer service, customer conduct, ethical employee behaviour, data privacy, cyber security are critical and important issues which assume even greater relevance in times of innovation, change and business disruptions," he said.

Good or rather best practices in these areas are the key spot pillars which build the edifice of a successful financial institution, more so in these challenging times, he said. Therefore, he said, there is a need to reflect on the role and expectations from the governance architecture viz, the Board and its Committees, the Independent Directors and the assurance functions in banks and other financial institutions on these issues.

Coming to the link between regulation and governance, he said, the regulators usually decide the regulatory perimeter and guide the regulated entities so that there are no accidents and surprises.

While it is for the regulators to issue instructions that enjoin upon banks to adopt the best practices insofar as governance is concerned, he said, it is for the Board to set the strategic direction, engage with management, and conduct review of key policies and frameworks.

The Boards should manage alignment of performance with pay as well as enforce accountability to ensure adherence to the best practices while achieving the objectives set for the bank by the Board, he added.



Bank of Baroda launches facility for cash withdrawals using UPI on its ATMs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bank of Baroda on Monday announced launch of Interoperable Cardless Cash Withdrawal (ICCW) facility where in a customer can withdraw cash using UPI from the bank's ATMs.

"The first public sector bank to launch this service, Bank of Baroda customers as well as customers of other participating issuer banks that use BHIM UPI, bob World UPI or any other UPI application enabled for ICCW on their mobile phone can withdraw cash from a Bank of Baroda ATM without using their debit card," the lender said.

On selecting the option 'UPI Cash Withdrawal' at a Bank of Baroda ATM, the customer needs to enter the withdrawal amount, post which a QR code is displayed on the ATM screen.

Explaining the process, the lender said the customer will scan the QR code using a UPI app enabled for ICCW and then authorise the transaction with her/his UPI PIN on the mobile phone to withdraw the cash from the ATM.

If multiple bank accounts are linked to a single UPI ID, ICCW functionality gives customers the option to select the account to be debited.

Akhil Handa, Chief Digital Officer at Bank of Baroda, said the new ICCW facility being offered by the bank gives customers the freedom to withdraw money without the use of a physical card - a simple, convenient and secure way to withdraw cash.

Customers can avail two transactions a day per account with a withdrawal limit of Rs 5,000 per transaction. Bank of Baroda has over 11,000 ATMs across the country.

RBI panel suggests a host of customer-centric initiatives for banks

PTI ■ MUMBAI

An RBI-appointed panel on Monday recommended hosts of customer-centric initiatives for banks, including online settlement of claims by heirs of deceased account holders, flexibility for submission of life certificates by pensioners and a centralised KYC database.

The report of the Committee for Review of Customer Service Standards in RBI Regulated Entities (REs) has also suggested that the operations of accounts should not be stopped pending periodic Know Your Customer (KYC) updates.

It recommended that there



should be a time limit for the return of property documents to borrowers after the closure of the loan account, failing which a penalty should be imposed on the lender.

In case of loss of property documents, the RE should not only be obligated to assist in obtaining certified registered copies of documents at their cost but also compensate the customer adequately, keeping in

view the time taken to arrange the alternate copies of the documents, the report said.

In May last year, the Reserve Bank set up the committee under former RBI Deputy Governor BP Kanungo.

The committee reviewed the complaints received under the RE's Internal Grievance Redress (IGR) mechanism in the last three years and observed that the number of complaints has been range-bound in the region of around one crore complaints per annum, the report said.

The REs, it suggested, "may adopt a nuanced approach for risk categorisation of the customers. For example, salary

earners with inflows and outflows consistent with the customer's profile need not necessarily be categorised as high risk, even though they may be 'high net worth individuals'.

Similarly, students can also be categorised as low-risk. The report said till the recommendation for a common complaint portal is put in place, the REs should have a system to enable the complainant to track the progress in the processing of the complaint.

"Customer-facing staff and officers should undergo mandatory training in soft skills to reduce instances of misbehaviour by the errant staff/officers," it said.

BUSINESS BRIEF

POWERGRID'S FORMER DIRECTOR (PERSONNEL) VK SINGH APPOINTED CEO OF PSSC

VK Singh, former Director (Personnel) of Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), has been appointed as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Power Sector Skill Council (PSSC). He is a highly decorated global business leader with nearly 38 years of professional experience in the HR domain, handling various HR-gamut as IR, Learning & Development, Talent Acquisition, Talent Management, Employee Engagement etc. He was also the President of Maharashtra HR Forum, which is a leading forum of HR Fraternity in the Indian Maharashtra CPSE Sector focusing to collaborate, highlight, brainstorm and resolve macro-level sectoral issues of common concern amongst the Maharatras. Power Sector Skill Council (PSSC) is an organisation facilitating skill development activities, including capacity building for training delivery to meet the needs of the Power Industry, that consist of the Conventional Power Sector (Generation, Transmission, and Distribution), Renewable Energy and Power Equipment Manufacturing Sector. The Ministry of Power, Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, Indian Electrical & Electronics Manufacturers Association, Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) are key stake holders in the council.

POWERGRID CELEBRATES WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY BY ORGANIZING AWARENESS TALKS ALONG WITH PLANTATION DRIVES

JAMMU: As a part of awareness on LIFE (Life style for Environment), launched by Honorable Prime Minister, POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED (POWERGRID on Monday organised plantation drives across its all establishments in Northern Region-II on the World Environment Day. LIFE Pledge was administered to all employees on this occasion.



Realtors' body CREDAI says its members undertake 55 green projects as per IGBC norms

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realtors' apex body CREDAI on Monday said its members have undertaken development of more than 55 green projects across the country as per the norms of Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) and sought loans at concessional interest rates to promote such projects.

In April, Confederation of Real Estate Developers Association of India (CREDAI) entered into a partnership with IGBC to facilitate its members to develop certified environmental-friendly housing projects.

The association had pledged the development of 1,000 green-certified projects in the next two years and 4,000 projects by 2030.

On the occasion of World Environment Day, CREDAI, in a statement, said, "its member developers have undertaken more than 55 green projects,



totaling 32 million square feet with the IGBC, under CREDAI's 'Green Crusaders' Programme."

These projects are part of CREDAI's commitment towards developing 4,000 green projects by 2030, it added.

"CREDAI is aggressively striving towards increasing awareness for further adoption of green building practices, which is in line with our overarching objective of achieving net zero for Indian real estate," CREDAI National President Boman Irani said.

Govt expects people to move towards e-cooking to capitalise on 24x7 power supply

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government expects people to move towards e-cooking (e-cooking) as the nation now has a 24x7 electricity supply in households, according to an official.

"We want to move towards e-cooking since we have 24/7 electricity in our households," Additional Secretary Power Ajay Tewari said while addressing a conference organised here. He pointed out that India has, in just 18 months, given Saubhagya (scheme) connections to 26 million households who did

not have electricity access.

Never before in the history of the world has so many households been given electricity connection in such a short time, he noted. "We are supplying energy for 23.5 hours in all urban areas and 23 hours, and more in rural areas. It is a big achievement that the age of power cuts is behind us," a power ministry statement quoted Tewari as saying. He also informed that 700 million people in the world, however, still do not have access to electricity, and universal energy access is one of the priorities of G20.

Gold falls ₹80; silver ₹400

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices fell Rs 80 to Rs 60,400 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid weak global cues, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal had finished at Rs 60,480 per 10 grams.

Silver also went lower Rs 400 to Rs 73,000 per kilo-

gramme. Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at Rs 60,400/10 gms, slightly down by Rs 80 per 10 grams, Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said.

In the overseas markets, both gold and silver were trading lower at USD 1,945 per ounce and USD 23.50 per ounce, respectively.

"Gold prices edged lower on the back of positive economic data points, higher US dollar and yields, offsetting support from the prospects that the Federal Reserve would pause its rate hikes this month," Navneet Damani, Senior VP - Commodity Research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

3F Oil Palm kick starts oil palm cultivation in Assam under central scheme

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

3F Oil Palm on Monday said it has started oil palm cultivation in Lakhimpur district, Assam, in association with the state government, and aims to cover over 20,000 hectare area in the next five years under a central scheme.

The Hyderabad-based company is undertaking the plantation as part of the centrally sponsored scheme National



Mission on Edible Oil - Oil Palm (NMEO-OP) and had signed an agreement with the Assam government in December 2022.

3F Oil Palm commenced oil palm plantation on Monday at Bokanala in Baginadi Block, Lakhimpur district, in the presence of state agriculture minister Atul Bora. The initiative aims to uplift farming communities and contribute to India's self-reliance on edible oils.

FinMin, ADB organise workshop on Expected Loss-based Credit Rating Mechanism

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Finance and Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Monday organised a workshop on Expected Loss-based Credit Rating Mechanism.

The workshop was addressed by Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth, the finance ministry said in a tweet. Around 120 representatives from banks, regulators, project developers, industrial associations, financial institutions and institutional investors participated in this workshop, it added.

Listed cos garner ₹63,300-cr from equity, debt in April

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Listed companies mobilised nearly Rs 63,300 crore from the capital market in April to fund their business expansion plans, with debt emerging as the most preferred route for fundraising. Fresh capital was garnered by firms for debt payment, to fund capital expenditure for new projects, support inorganic growth like acquisitions as also for marketing and R&D purposes, market experts said.

Out of the cumulative Rs 63,278 crore garnered in April this year, funds totalling Rs 55,462 crore were mopped up

from the debt market and the remaining Rs 7,816 crore came from the equity market, according to the data with Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi).

In comparison, companies raised Rs 19,588 crore through equities and Rs 14,750 crore from debt market in April 2022.

The higher fundraising in April last year through equities was primarily driven by preferential allotment of equity shares to the tune of Rs 13,675 crore and the Follow-on Public Offer of Ruchi Soya Industries that raked in Rs 4,300 crore through the route.



Wipro shareholders approve ₹12,000-cr share buyback

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IT company Wipro shareholders have approved a share buyback programme worth Rs 12,000 crore, according to a scrutinizer report released on stock exchanges on Monday.

The Wipro board had approved the buyback of 26.96 crore equity shares at a price of Rs 445 apiece.

According to the Scrutinizer's report on the special resolution by way of postal ballot and e-voting process, 99.9 per cent voted in favour of the share buyback resolution.

"The Chairman noted the results of voting as stated above and it was declared and recorded that the special resolution as set out in the Notice of Postal Ballot dated April 27, 2023, was duly passed by the shareholders on June 01, 2023, with requisite majority," the report said.

The e-voting period commenced at in the morning of May 3 and ended at 5 pm on June 1.

The Board of Wipro had approved a proposal to buyback up to 26,96,62,921 equity shares, being 4.91 per cent of the total paid-up equity shares of the company for an aggregate amount not exceeding Rs 12,000 crore at a price of Rs 445 per equity share.

Members of the promoter and promoter group of the company have indicated their intention to participate in the proposed buyback, as per the report.

Napoli celebrate title triumph, Ibrahimovic retires

AFP ■ NAPLES (ITALY)

Napoli fans watched their heroes finally lift the Serie A trophy on Sunday as coach Luciano Spalletti walked away from Naples, while Zlatan Ibrahimovic announced his retirement from football.

A 2-0 win over relegated Sampdoria was little more than a hors-d'oeuvre before the real reason fans jammed into the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona — to see their team lift the trophy for the first time in 33 long years.

Victor Osimhen opened the scoring from the penalty spot midway through the second half, the 26th league strike of a stunning season which made him Serie A's all-time top African scorer.

Giovanni Simeone then made sure the hosts would finish the season on 90 points in the 85th minute with a stunning long-range strike before celebrating by holding up a Napoli shirt worn by icon and compatriot Maradona.

"I don't know, the president has to decide that," Osimhen told DAZN when asked whether he might leave in a big-money summer move. "I love the people of Napoli, they have shown me so much love. For me, I don't mind, the president decides and I will just go with the flow."

Spalletti will be on gardening leave for a year while still under contract with Napoli, and he will return to his Tuscan vineyard the oldest ever coach to win the Scudetto at 64.

'TRUE TO MYSELF'
Napoli's title triumph was the crowning glory of Spalletti's long and eventful coaching



career which has brought plenty of plaudits but few trophies.

"I need to be true to myself, leaving was a decision I made, that I came to. Even when I'm at home it'll be like I was in the stands watching and cheering for them," said Spalletti.

Fans will be hoping that whoever takes Spalletti's place will be able to utilise the hugely talented squad assembled by outgoing sporting director Cristiano Giuntoli, as some like Osimhen are targets for richer clubs north of the Alps.

"I would tell them to trust these boys because they have a human and playing quality that means you can allow them to keep the ball rolling," said

Spalletti. Fabio Quagliarella openly blubbed as he was honoured by his fellow Napoli supporters in his final match in Italy's top flight.

The 40-year-old, who has scored 182 Serie A goals, was given a plaque by supporters who also unfurled a banner in the stands which said 'you will never be forgotten by your people', and was given a rousing applause when he was substituted late on.

Napoli fans considered the Samp captain an enemy when he left for hated rivals Juventus after just one season in 2010, unaware until years later that a bizarre stalking plot had forced his departure.

ZLATAN QUILTS
Zlatan Ibrahimovic surprised fans by revealing that he was quitting football after AC Milan's 3-1 win over Verona which sent their opponents into a relegation play-off with Spezia who lost 2-1 at Roma.

The 41-year-old, a key figure in Milan's resurgence to the top of Italian football since his return in late 2019, was in the stands injured as he has been for most of the season before announcing his retirement.

"It's the moment to say goodbye to football, not just to you," said Ibrahimovic on the San Siro pitch. "There are too many emotions for me right now. Forza

Milan and goodbye."

Ibrahimovic was hugged by Rafael Leao who after signing a new deal until 2028 on Friday scored twice late on to secure the win for fourth-placed Milan.

However Paulo Dybala's stoppage-time penalty ensured Europa League football for Roma and sent Spezia into a one-off match next Sunday set to decide their and Verona's fate.

Roma's win means Juventus have to settle for the Europa Conference League despite Federico Chiesa giving them a 1-0 win at Udinese, assuming they are not banned from Europe by UEFA for financial irregularities.



Attacking icon Ibrahimovic says goodbye to football

AFP ■ MILAN

Zlatan Ibrahimovic brought the curtain down on a long, trophy-packed career on Sunday when he unexpectedly announced his retirement from football.

Veteran striker Ibrahimovic revealed his decision to quit the game during an on-pitch ceremony following AC Milan's 3-1 win over Verona which ended their Serie A campaign.

"It's the moment to say goodbye to football, not just to you," said Ibrahimovic on the San Siro pitch.

"There are too many emotions for me right now. Forza Milan and goodbye."

The 41-year-old had been expected to simply bid farewell to Milan fans after his departure from the seven-time European champions was announced on Saturday.

you gave me happiness, the second time you gave me love," said Ibrahimovic.

"You welcomed me with open arms, you made me feel at home, I will be a Milanista for the rest of my life."

Ibrahimovic was a key figure in Milan's resurgence to the top of Italian football after his return to the club, helping to bring them back from the doldrums and eventually win the Scudetto last season.

Over the course of his career Ibrahimovic won league titles in the Netherlands, Italy, Spain and France, although his only major European trophy was the 2017 Europa League with Manchester United.

Making his announcement at the San Siro was appropriate as he also won three straight league titles with Inter Milan between 2006 and 2009 before a turbulent spell at Barcelona.

His retirement comes after a season in which he has hardly featured for Stefano Pioli's side after being plagued with injuries, returning in February following surgery on his left knee in May.

In July he signed a deal which netted him around one million euros (\$1.02 million) in fixed salary, with large bonuses linked to appearances and achievements.

But after agreeing that deal the 41-year-old only started one match and netted once for Milan, a 3-1 win at Udinese in March in which he became the oldest goal scorer in Serie A history.

He then picked up a calf injury in a pre-match warm up in April and ended his career sidelined, scotching rumours that he was set to move to Monza and targeting Euro 2024 with Sweden.

'Legendary' Benzema strikes on Madrid farewell, Valladolid relegated

AFP ■ BARCELONA

Real Madrid's departing great Karim Benzema struck from the penalty spot to earn his side a 1-1 draw against Athletic Bilbao on Sunday in La Liga as he said goodbye to fans at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Elsewhere Real Valladolid were relegated after a 0-0 draw with Getafe, while five other sides near the bottom were able to breathe a sigh of relief after a gripping conclusion to the season.

Champions Barcelona were beaten 2-1 at Celta Vigo, with Gabri Veiga's brace ensuring the Galician side will remain in the top flight next season.

Benzema, whom Madrid confirmed would leave this summer earlier in the day, departing after 14 years at the club, rolled his penalty down the middle to level the game, before being substituted to great applause.

The draw ensured Real Madrid would finish above city rivals Atletico Madrid in second place, after Diego Simeone's side tied 2-2 at Villarreal on the final day.

"I spoke with him this morning and he told me he was going. He's taken the decision and I told him I respect it completely," said Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti.

Ancelotti said Benzema's choice came by surprise, after the Italian himself said Saturday he expected the forward to stay.

"I have coached one of the best in the world, not a forward, a complete footballer," continued the coach.

"A very friendly, humble, serious person. We can't be happy he is going, but we have to respect his decision. What he has done at this club is legendary and unforget-



table." Athletic were the stronger team and only a stunning Thibaut Courtois penalty save to deny Mikel Vesga kept his team level at the break.

Oihan Sancet struck early in the second half to give the visitors the lead but Benzema netted from the spot after a soft penalty was given for a foul on Eder Militao.

It was the 35-year-old's 354th goal of a sparkling career in the Spanish capital after his 2009 move from Lyon.

Benzema, who has won five Champions League titles and La Liga on four occasions, seems to be set to play in Saudi Arabia, where former team-mate Cristiano Ronaldo has moved.

Vinicius Junior made his first appearance for Real Madrid since he was racially abused by Valencia fans, causing worldwide anger and support for him.

Madrid's season was a disappointing one — they won the Copa del Rey but were beaten heavily by Manchester City in the Champions League semi-finals and finish 10 points behind their most bitter rivals, champions Barcelona.

Xavi Hernandez's side were beaten at Balaidos, with Veiga slotting home in the first half and then adding a second from an attempted cross which flew in.

Ansu Fati pulled a goal back for the champions but they could not find a leveller.

FALLING SHORT
Valladolid could not find a way through against Getafe and were relegated.

"There's little explanation, the team tried, we tried to make it hard for Getafe but we didn't do it," said Valladolid goalkeeper Jordi Masip.

"It's a huge shame for all the team, all the fans, all the city, I can't say much more. We needed to score, there was no other way."

Their final hope would have been a late Espanyol winner against Almeria, but the Andalusians held on for a 3-3 draw to survive by a point in 17th place.

Valencia were another team who started the day in danger but they earned a 1-1 draw at Real Betis, who said their own goodbye to captain Joaquin Sanchez.

The 41-year-old is retiring and made his 622nd appearance in the top flight, equalling the all-time record first set by goalkeeper Andoni Zubizarreta.

"It's a special day, a beautiful day, when I'm with my people, my family, the club that gave me everyone," an emotional Joaquin told Movistar, kissing the Benito Villamarin pitch when he was substituted.

AFP ■ RIYADH

Saudi Arabia is hoping to lure a swathe of world-famous footballers including Luka Modric and Hugo Lloris, a source close to the negotiations has told AFP, after snagging Cristiano Ronaldo and launching bids for Lionel Messi and Karim Benzema.

"More than 10" seasoned players including N'Golo Kante and Roberto Firmino have been approached, the source said, by the oil-rich kingdom which has ambitions of hosting the World Cup and is betting on sport to help revamp its austere image.

According to Saudi sources and state media this weekend, delegations flew to Paris and Madrid to secure the signatures of Messi and Benzema after their final games for Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid.

But the Saudis are also "in contact with more than 10 players, many of them won the World Cup or the Champions League, to join the Saudi league next season," said the source close to the talks, on condition of anonymity. In addition to Messi, "the list includes Benzema, (Sergio) Ramos, (Angel) Di Maria, Modric, Hugo Lloris, Kante, Firmino, (Jordi) Alba and (Sergio) Busquets".

Modric, Lloris among 'more than 10' Saudi targets

AFP ■ RIYADH

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Sabalenka sets up Svitolina French Open clash, boycotts media

AFP ■ PARIS

Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus moved into a politically-charged French Open quarter-final with Ukraine's Elina Svitolina on Sunday and immediately set the tone for the high-profile confrontation by boycotting Roland Garros media for a second time.

Australian Open champion and world number two Sabalenka defeated Sloane Stephens 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 to reach the last eight in Paris for the first time. Tuesday's clash will be the third meeting between Sabalenka and Svitolina but first since Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year. Belarus is a key military ally of Moscow.

Svitolina has played two Russians so far at the tournament and refused to shake hands with both in protest at the war. Sabalenka defeated Svitolina's Ukrainian compatriot Marta Kostyuk in the opening round last weekend.

Kostyuk's decision also not to shake hands brought her a chorus of boos from the Paris crowd. Kostyuk said the spectators who jeered her should be "embarrassed".

After beating Stephens on Sunday, it was announced that for the second match in succession Sabalenka would not



appear at a post-match news conference. She boycotted her last scheduled press conference on Friday after defeating Kamilla Rakhimova in the third round.

She claimed she "did not feel safe" when previously questioned about the war and her relationship with Belarus president Alexander Lukashenko.

"Aryna Sabalenka will not be doing a general press conference tonight," said the organisers in a statement.

"An interview with a WTA editorial reporter will be conducted shortly and transcribed and distributed."

Not surprisingly, the delicate question of a Belarus v Ukraine clash was avoided in a bland,

official handout provided by organisers. Sabalenka limited her comments to her expectations for Tuesday's match, pledging to show "my best tennis".

After her first two rounds, Sabalenka had fended off a series of tough questions over her individual stance on the war as well as links to the government in Belarus.

'NO COMMENTS'
On Wednesday she was asked why in 2020 she "signed a letter to support Lukashenko" when "he was torturing and beating up protesters" in the street.

"I have no comments to you, so thank you for your question," she replied.

Djokovic, Alcaraz advance to French Open quarter-finals

PARIS ■ AFP

Novak Djokovic swept into the French Open quarter-finals for the 14th straight year on Sunday as world number one Carlos Alcaraz breezed past Lorenzo Musetti to stay on a collision course with the 22-time Grand Slam champion.

Third seed Djokovic ended the surprise run of Peruvian outsider Juan Pablo Varillas, winning 6-3, 6-2, 6-2, and has yet to drop a set through four matches.

The Serb, chasing a third Roland Garros crown, is into a record 17th French Open quarter-final after making the last eight at a major for the 55th time.

"I'm proud of it, but my attention is already in the next match," said Djokovic, who faces Russian 11th seed Karen Khachanov for a place in the semi-finals, where Alcaraz could await.

here. I'm trying to stay mentally the course and of course not look too far.

"Obviously the performance of today gives me a great deal of confidence about how I felt, about how I played."

Varillas, 27, was the first player from Peru to reach the second week of a Grand Slam since Jaime Yzaga made the US Open quarter-finals 29 years ago.

Djokovic raced 4-0 ahead in the opening set only for Varillas to break in the next game and then have a chance to get back on serve in the seventh game.

But once Djokovic held for a 5-2 lead it was plain sailing for him as he closed out victory in just under two hours.

meeting at the French Open in 2020. Alcaraz looked every part the tournament favourite as he dismantled the talented Musetti in straight sets to return to the French Open last eight.

Musetti had not lost a set in three rounds but Alcaraz brushed the Italian 17th seed aside in barely two hours, triumphing 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 to avenge last year's defeat on clay in the Hamburg final.

"I think I played such a great level, really high quality of shots. I played a really complete match from the first ball until the last and I'm pretty happy to get through this tough round," said Alcaraz.

The 20-year-old faces a tough next assignment in 2021 runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas, who eased past Austrian qualifier Sebastian Ofner 7-5, 6-3, 6-0.

"The clash we've been all waiting for," said Tsitsipas, the Greek fifth seed who has lost all



four meetings with Alcaraz. "I think everyone was expecting it, weren't they? And it's here. It's game on."

SABALENKA TESTED BUT MOVES ON
Aryna Sabalenka beat 2018 finalist Sloane Stephens 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 in a topsy-turvy encounter in the night session — the first women's match to feature in the primetime slot this year.

Australian Open champion Sabalenka surged into a 5-0 lead in the opener but Stephens saved four set points as she reeled off five games on the bounce to level.

Second seed Sabalenka eventually edged the tie-break and again held off Stephens in a tight second set to continue her best run in Paris.

The Belarusian goes into a politically-charged duel with Elina Svitolina who, playing her first Grand Slam since becoming a mother, reached the quarter-finals for the fourth time.

The Ukrainian defeated Daria Kasatkina 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) for a seventh win in seven meetings against the Russian who was a semi-finalist last year.

As with all her matches, Svitolina opted not to shake hands with her Russian opponent in protest at the war in Ukraine. Belarus is also a key military ally of Moscow.

Kasatkina still gave her rival a friendly thumbs-up. Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, the 2021 runner-up, rallied from a set and a break down to dump out Belgian 28th seed Elise Mertens 3-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-3.

The Russian, whose ranking has plunged to 333 after a serious knee injury, is the lowest-ranked Grand Slam quarter-finalist in the tournament's history.

Pavlyuchenkova will take on Karolina Muchova for a place in the last four after the Czech saw off lucky loser Elina Avanesyan 6-4, 6-3.

India brace for Starc threat, remain undecided between Kishan and Bharat

PTI ■ LONDON

The Indians are taking the Mitchell Starc threat very seriously and if one goes by their second training session at The Oval ahead of the World Test Championship final, they are yet to decide between Ishan Kishan and KS Bharat as their wicket-keeping choice.

Australia trained in the morning in cold and overcast conditions, but the Indians brought sunshine to The Oval when they turned up in the afternoon session. Though it was an optional session, the majority of the members showed up barring Umesh Yadav, Mohammed Siraj and reserve player Suryakumar Yadav.

In the two-and-a-half-hour session, skipper Rohit Sharma closely tracked the proceedings with coach Rahul Dravid and only took throwdowns after all the main batters had a long hit in the nets.

While Scott Boland and Pat Cummins can do a lot of damage with their seam bowling, the Indians spent most of their time playing left-arm pace.

Squad member Jaydev Unadkat, net bowler Aniket Choudhary and a local pacer gave the batters plenty of practice with their left-arm bowling.

Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Shubman Gill and Mohammed Shami were the

first ones to get a hit. Shami batted for more than 30 minutes, showing that he takes his batting very seriously. Virat Kohli hit some balls against spinners before moving to the adjacent net to face Shami and Unadkat. After that he got some crucial catching practice in the slips

alongside Rahane and Gill. Delhi offie Pulkit Narang, one of the net bowlers travelling with the side, bowled a long spell with batters using him for the tougher battles against Nathan Lyon.

India need to decide between two spinners or a fourth pace option and one could not

come to a conclusion two days before the game. Ravindra Jadeja had a bowl while Ashwin only came out to bat. Another tough choice they need to make is in the wicket-keeping department. Both Bharat and Kishan did their wicket-keeping drills before moving to the batting nets.

The experts are divided in their choice with many backing Kishan for his better batting abilities. Bharat is being pushed as a superior wicket-keeping option. One will have to wait till the final practice session to arrive at a conclusion about the playing eleven.



Have got a lot of insights from MSD on keeping: KS Bharat



PTI ■ LONDON

India wicketkeeper KS Bharat, likely to be the first-choice glovesman for the World Test Championship final against Australia, has said he has got a "lot of insights" about keeping in England from former India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni during the recently-concluded IPL. Bharat explained how Dhoni sharing his valuable tips could help him if he gets the team management's nod for the big game at The Oval from Wednesday.

"Recently during the IPL, I had a word with Mahendra," Bharat told ICC on Monday.

"He (talked about) his experiences keeping in England as well as what would work the best for any wicket-keeper. It was a

very good conversation and there were a lot of insights from that," added Bharat. He said Dhoni's situational awareness was simply unmatched.

"It's the awareness — the best example is MS Dhoni, the awareness he has in keeping is outstanding," Bharat added. The 29-year-old Gujarat Titans player also felt that his job requires a lot of "intent" and one needs to be really passionate to do the "thankless job".

"You need intent and passion to be a keeper, because keeping is a thankless job."

While the debate continues on who between Bharat and Ishan Kishan should be in the XI for the WTC final, the former is the frontrunner given his experience of playing four Tests.

Bharat, who is in the squad

as India's first-choice wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant is recovering from a horrific car crash and his back-up KL Rahul is recuperating from a surgery on his right thigh, added that keeping brings "challenges" which have to be embraced.

"You keep 90 overs in a Test day and you have to be concentrating ball by ball, so you have to accept the challenges and embrace it and be really passionate about contributing to the team," added Bharat. Ahead of the contest for Test supremacy, Bharat's place in the side is one big selection dilemma being faced by the Rohit Sharma-led India. He has played just four Tests — all against Australia recently at home during the Border Gavaskar series.

Though he has performed admirably behind the stumps, his showing with the bat has been dismal — he had a top score of 44 in six innings.

However, Bharat's domestic experience of 90 first-class games could tilt the scale in his favour. Kishan, on the other hand, is yet to make his Test debut and has 48 first-class appearances. However, the young wicketkeeper has accomplished more with the bat than Bharat, having scored an ODI double-century against Bangladesh in Chattogram late last year.

To add to that, Kishan scored 454 runs for Mumbai Indians in IPL 2023. The left-handed batter also brings variety in an otherwise right-hand dominant batting line-up.

IPL gives confidence but WTC final will be completely different game: Shubman



PTI ■ LONDON

The tremendous form in the Indian Premier League has given star India opener Shubman Gill "a bit of confidence" going into the World Test Championship final against Australia beginning on Wednesday, but he insisted that the five-day game will be a totally different proposition.

Gill was in scintillating touch for the Gujarat Titans in this year's IPL, smashing three centuries to be the tournament's

most prolific batter with 890 runs at an average just shy of 60.

"It does give you a bit of confidence (from the IPL), but I feel this is a completely different scenario and a completely different game," Gill told the ICC.

"But that's the fun about it. Last week we were playing something completely different with a different atmosphere and that is the challenge and that is what is exciting about Test cricket."

Gill was part of the Indian team that lost the inaugural

World Test Championship final to New Zealand by eight wickets in Southampton in 2021, with the stylish right-hander scoring 28 and eight.

The 23-year-old Gill said his team has learnt plenty from the disappointing defeat against the Kiwis.

"We have been talking about some of the things we have learnt as a team and especially as a batting group from playing that match," he said.

"Hopefully we will be able to overcome the mistakes we made last time."

Senior batter Cheteshwar Pujara, who had already acclimatised with the English conditions with yet another spell with Sussex in the second division of County Championship, believes India are well prepared for the contest.

"We have had very good preparation so hopefully this time we will cross the line," Pujara said.

"Most of the guys have played enough cricket here and some of them have played County cricket too."

Pujara scored three centuries while accumulating 545 runs from eight innings during his stint.

"You need that experience...We know each other's strengths and we have played a lot of cricket against Australia as well so we know what to expect from the opposition team."

We don't feel any pressure of trying to win an ICC trophy: Dravid

PTI ■ LONDON

They may not have won an ICC title in 10 years but India head coach Rahul Dravid on Monday insisted his team is not feeling any pressure going into the World Test Championship final against Australia.

However, the former India captain said it would be nice to win the trophy as it is something his team has worked towards over the last two years.

India lost the inaugural WTC final to New Zealand in 2021 and have been guilty of faltering in knockout games.

"No, not at all. I mean we don't feel any pressure in terms of trying to win an ICC trophy. Of course it would be nice to do it. It would be certainly nice to be able to win an ICC tournament. But also in the context of things, you look at this and you see this is the culmination of two years of work."

"It's a culmination of a lot of success that gets you here. So there's a lot of positives to take from that to see where you stand on the table. Winning series in Australia, drawing series here, being very competitive everywhere that this team has played in the world over the last five or six years."

"I think those are things that will never change just because you have or you don't have an ICC trophy. That's really the bigger picture," said Dravid.

'RAHANE SHOULD NOT LOOK AT THIS AS A ONE-OFF GAME': Ajinkya Rahane is set to play his first Test in 18 months and a failure in the game could potentially be career-ending. Dravid had a word of advice for the experienced batter.

"Firstly it's good to have him. We've had a few injuries which have probably led to him having the opportunity to come back into the squad. Great for us to have someone of his quality back. He brings obviously a lot of that experience, he brings proven performance in overseas conditions. Even in England he's played some terrific innings for us."

"He brings terrific catching in the slips as well to the group. He just brings his personality to the group as well which is really important. He's led the team to considerable success. And again, I wouldn't want him to approach this as just a one-off."

Dravid said the 82 Test veteran might go on to play many more five-day games for the country.

"Sometimes you get dropped from teams and you make a comeback and you can play for as long as you're playing well and as long as you're performing. It's not written in stone or rule that you only get one match. He puts in a good performance, really shows what he's got."

"Who knows, even when people come back from injury,



you never know what can happen. So again, from my point of view, it's not really only about this match. Yes this match is important but then in the larger context of things there's a lot of cricket to be played further down the road as well," he said.

'PUJARA'S ADVICE HAS BEEN VALUABLE': Cheteshwar Pujara has scored tons of runs in county cricket in England over the past couple of years. While his teammates were playing in the IPL, he was piling on the runs for Sussex.

"We've had conversations with Pujee - about captaincy, about obviously batting, but also he leads Sussex. So he's also got a good handle on things in terms of the kind of tactics and

the strategy that's used by a lot of the county bowlers that he's played with."

"So we've had some conversations and discussions obviously with him in and around that and we'll see how we can maybe incorporate some of that. Doesn't drastically change some of the basics of the game. They always remain the same," said Dravid.

The Oval will host its first ever Test in June and the conditions might not be as batting friendly as they are later in the English summer. However, Dravid is not reading too much into it.

"We just have to react to what we see in terms of the conditions and how it plays out in

the middle. And hopefully we have the resources and the ability to deal with whatever comes in front of us."

'WANT MORE TEAMS PLAYING TEST CRICKET': Franchise cricket around the world has jeopardized the future of the five-day game with only few nations committed to Test cricket. When it comes to the traditional format, Dravid feels the more the better.

"I really hope that, because of things like the World Test Championship when you have some context to a lot of these, to a lot of the bilateral games, not that - honestly, not that they don't have context in itself."

"I mean, anytime you play for your country, play against someone else, there's always context, there's always - you always want to win those series. But you know, really hope that it will encourage a lot more teams to be able to potentially play a lot more Test cricket or to be able to find a way to play a lot more Test cricket."

"I know it is complicated and that it's hard to go into depth in a press conference and there are a variety of reasons why that is probably not happening, both in terms of time, finances, there are many things that go into it."

"But certainly, we'd like to see a lot more Test cricket - personally at least, I'd like to see a lot more Test cricket being played," he added.

Australia's out-of-form Warner determined to exit on own terms

AFP ■ SYDNEY

Opener David Warner will be determined to show he still has what it takes when he begins the countdown to retirement at the World Test Championship final starting Wednesday.

The 36-year-old former vice-captain has been a mainstay of the Australian team since making his Test debut against New Zealand in 2011, racking up 103 caps and 8,158 runs.

But he approaches the WTC final at The Oval against India and the five-Test Ashes series from June 16 more vulnerable than ever with one century in his past 32 innings and a mediocre record in England.

His prolonged poor form had prompted intense speculation about how much longer he would carry on and over the weekend Warner set out his timetable to end his red-ball career.

The pugnacious left-hander hopes to bid farewell in front of his hometown fans in the New Year Test against Pakistan in



Sydney in January.

He aims to keep playing white-ball cricket until the 2024 World Cup.

"I probably owe it to myself and my family... if I can get through this (WTC final and Ashes) and make the Pakistan series, I will definitely finish up then," he told reporters in England.

Warner will be desperate to

go out on his own terms, but with his place under threat, how much of a part he plays in his final Ashes series remains to be seen.

He made Australia's squad heading to England but chief selector George Bailey then added to the uncertainty, saying Warner would play against India but non-committal beyond that.

Warner suffered a fractured

elbow and concussion on the blockbuster tour of India in February, missing the last two Tests, which itself came on the back of an extended lean spell.

There was talk afterwards that he may have played his last Test.

Former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting has suggested Warner missed an ideal opportunity to hang up the pads after hitting a double-century against South Africa at the Melbourne Cricket Ground last December in his 100th Test.

'ONE OF THE GREATEST' The form book, both recent and past, does not bode well for Warner.

In 13 Tests against the old enemy on English soil Warner averages 26.04, well below his career 45.57, and is yet to score a century.

A dismal 2019 Ashes campaign in England saw him manage just 9.50 with the bat.

To make matters worse, he will again come face-to-face with his nemesis Stuart Broad and Jimmy Anderson, two

bowlers who have tormented him over the years.

Warner is also nursing a sore left elbow after being hit in the nets — the same one he fractured during Australia's tour of India.

Despite his impending retirement from Test cricket Warner insists he will not change his mindset.

"I've played every game like it's my last," he said.

Should he fail to fire, Marcus Harris or Matt Renshaw would likely step in to partner Usman Khawaja at the top of the order.

Harris told Australian media he had seen some of the scrutiny around Warner's position in the side, but that he had earned the right to decide when the time was right to move on.

"To be honest, I'm probably not going to be playing until Davey either isn't playing or decides not to be playing," Harris said.

"But my opinion with Dave is that I think he's one of, if not the, greatest openers that Australia's ever had."

Australia's Smith wary of following Warner's retirement plan

AFP ■ LONDON

Steve Smith insists he has no plans to follow the lead of Australia team-mate David Warner by announcing an intended date for his retirement from Test cricket.

Warner, with just one century in his past 32 innings, last week announced his intention to retire from Test cricket in front of his hometown fans in the New Year Test against Pakistan in Sydney in January.

Former Australia captain Smith indicated in January he was contemplating retirement before going back on those remarks.

Asked if he had any greater clarity about his future in the light of Warner's comments ahead of the World Test Championship (WTC) final against India, Smith told reporters at the Oval: "No."

Both Warner and Smith are mainstays of the Test side, however the 34-year-old Smith is two years younger than Warner.

Whether Warner gets the chance to bow out as he would



like may depend on his form during the five-Test Ashes series in England that follows hot on the heels of the WTC final.

"It's nice to have an end date, I suppose, if that's the way you want to go," Smith said. "But ultimately for all of us we're going to be doing our job and for batters that is scoring runs."

"In an ideal world, I think Davey said that's when he'd like to pick it up. But we've got to score runs, all of us. So we'll see what happens."

Smith has been a prolific performer in Test cricket, scoring 8,792 runs at a high average of 59.80, including 30 hundreds in 96 matches.

But the WTC final and Ashes series are taking place amid fears the future of the long-format game could be threatened by the growth of global franchise Twenty20 cricket, with top players set to be offered year-round contracts across multiple leagues.

"I am slightly concerned," Smith said. "Hopefully Test cricket still stays alive and well."

"I think it's in a good place at the moment in terms of some of the games we've seen recently have been pretty amazing."

"As a traditionalist and someone that loves Test cricket, I hope it still remains at the front of all the boards' minds and stays alive and well for some time to come."